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THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Understanding Society: A Social Science Foundation Course Units 6-9

Socialisation

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY: A FOUNDATION COURSE UNITS 6–9

Socialisation

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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I.2

INTRODUCTION TO UNITS 6–9

This block of four units opens the second section of our course: How People Live in Societies.

We are beginning our discussion by focussing on various aspects of human *socialisation*; that is, we are studying the major factors which affect the development of the human infant into a member of his society.

This question has been a primary interest of psychologists and sociologists and it is their disciplines which are represented in this block.

Unit 6 is concerned with a discussion of how the child *learns* the ways of his society. As you will see, different answers can be given to this apparently straightforward question. An attempt is made in this unit to relate the findings of different theoretical and empirical approaches to each other.

The next Unit (7) is asking an equally complex and controversial question: What is personality and what factors influence personality development? Personality is, as you will see, in part at any rate, the product of the socialisation processes but whilst Unit 6 could be said to be concerned with explaining how the child learns to be *like* others in his society, Unit 7 focusses on the sources of variation between people; that is, we ask in this unit what are the factors which determine the *differences* between people.

In Unit 8 we are looking at attitudes – how they are formed, how far they can be changed and their complex relationship to overt behaviour. The topic has been chosen for this unit because of its central place in social-psychological research and theory and for its importance to the understanding of human behaviour. In discussing the problems associated with the changing of attitudes this unit, by implication, also illustrates that socialisation should be regarded as a *life-long* process. Although all social scientists recognise the importance of the early years for the physical and mental development of the child, and for the formation of his personality, they have become increasingly aware that experiences later in life also affect our values and our behaviour.

In Unit 9, we are looking at one of the main contexts in which socialisation takes place – the family. The unit explores some of the variations in the form of the family in different societies – variations which, in turn, affect socialisation. At the same time this unit points to certain underlying patterns in the *functions* performed by the family. It also discusses the relationship between the particular form of family prevalent in a given society and its other social institutions.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS **(bound separately)**

Self-assessment tests.
Computer marked assignments.
Tutor marked assignments.
Radio notes.
Television notes.
Notes on the Correspondence material.

THE SET BOOKS

Understanding Society,* Readings in the Social Sciences, edited by the Social Sciences Foundation Course Team. London, Open University Press/Macmillan (1970).

Society, by E. Chinoy, New York, Random House (1967).
Introducing Sociology, by P. Worsley, London, Penguin Books (1970).

Introduction to Psychology, by E. R. Hilgard and L. Atkinson, 4th edition, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World (1967).

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* Referred to in the text as the *Reader*.

Unit 6

Child Socialisation

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CHILD SOCIALISATION

1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1 we suggested that most human behaviour is learned within the lifetime of the individual. This continuous learning process is referred to as socialisation. *What* we learn is related to the culture of the society in which we live and, as for instance Unit 5 demonstrated, cultures can differ greatly from each other.

From the point of view of the sociologist and the social anthropologist the study of socialisation is of great importance. Sociologists study *societies*, their continued existence or the changes they undergo, and they are therefore more concerned with the outcomes, the results of socialisation. The orientation of the psychologist (and this unit is written by psychologists) is somewhat different. The psychologist is interested in understanding the *social influence processes* through which human learning takes place. The approach of the psychologist then is not to be thought of as being contradictory or incompatible with that of the sociologist or social anthropologist, rather it is complementary.

An individual develops into a 'socialised' human being through *interaction* with others. A man's values, his language, his ways of behaving are all learned from other people (though certain limits to his development are set by hereditary and innate factors). The concept of learning, as used by the psychologist, is a very wide one – it need not imply an intention to learn or an intention to teach. Changes in behaviour due to maturation (that is, physical growth and development) or due to physical or mental deterioration (through ageing, injury, illness, fatigue or drugs) are *not* part of the socialisation process.

However the distinction between 'maturation' and 'learning' is artificial to the extent that what a child *can* learn may depend on the maturation level he has reached. Thus he cannot be taught to control his bladder until his body is ready to do so.

Initially, the word 'socialisation' was used almost exclusively in relation to the learning experiences of the young child. Increasingly we have come to understand that though a child's early experiences are very important in shaping his later behaviour and values, socialisation should be regarded as a life-long process. It does not suddenly end with adolescence and what is often referred to as *adult socialisation* has become an important area of study. (Certain aspects of adult socialisation will be discussed in Units 8, 31 and 36.) However in this unit we focus on childhood socialisation.

In Radio Programme Two we briefly discussed the rôle of theory in research. We stated that a given theoretical position or perspective (arrived at through previous research) will give rise to hypotheses and these in turn will lead to the further collection and interpretation of data. When we think of the all-embracing importance of the concept of socialisation to the understanding of human behaviour it is not surprising to find that many different theories concerning socialisation processes have been evolved. In the following sections we will examine some of the key issues and we will try to establish how far different approaches and findings can be reconciled with each other. We will first consider some of the findings of the so-called learning theorists; then we will discuss concepts such as *imitation*, *identification* and *rôle learning* and their relevance to our understanding of human learning.

2 THE APPROACH OF THE LEARNING THEORISTS

2.1 The Concept of Reinforcement

Much of our understanding of *human* learning has been contributed by researchers who were initially concerned with animal learning. As we pointed out in Unit 1 preoccupation with work with animals arose from the desirability of carrying out precisely controlled laboratory experiments. From such work certain fundamental principles and concepts emerged which also aid our understanding of human learning. One of these concepts is the notion of *reinforcement*. In a typical animal learning experiment the animal is first deprived of some basic need like food or water. In the experiments reported by B. F. Skinner (*Scientific American*, Reprint 423), for example, pigeons are often used, and these animals are strictly rationed so that their body weight is maintained at about 80 per cent of what it should be, given adequate food supplies.[1] The deprived animal is then exposed to a certain situation; if it is a rat it is perhaps placed in a maze, in which food may be found in one passageway, or it may be placed in a box fitted with a lever and a food cup, into which a pellet of food will be dropped when the lever is pressed. In the case of pigeons, the usual method is to present one or more discs, set vertically in the wall of the cage, which have to be pecked at for a reward of food.

Let us take as an example the following experiment in *discrimination learning* with pigeons.[2] The wall of the cage is fitted with two discs, one of which has a square shape painted on it, the other has a circle. We intend to teach the pigeon to peck the disc containing the square and to ignore the other stimulus. We place the pigeon in the cage and the apparatus outside the cage is fixed so that a pellet of food will be presented when and only when the 'correct' disc has been pecked. If we observe the pigeon, we would note first that it will wander around the cage, exhibiting what is called 'general activity'. (Animals in a state of drive are always more active than satiated animals.) At some stage during its general activity, perhaps due to a displacement activity (Unit 1), the pigeon will happen by chance to peck at the correct disc. When this happens a pellet of food drops immediately into the chamber and the bird will consume it. During this initial stage of learning the incorrect disc may also be pecked, but this response will not be followed by the food pellet. Now let us go away for a while, and come back an hour or so later. The apparatus is designed not only to present the reward when the correct disc has been tapped, but also to record all the pecks as a function of time. When we examine this record we will observe that the frequency with which the correct disc is pecked increases until a certain level is reached, and thereafter the pecking is maintained at a steady rate. The slope of the curve represents the *rate* of learning, and the pigeon is said to have discriminated the

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[1] It has been pointed out that pigeons in the wild are 'naturally' reduced to about 80 per cent of their body weight, and are, therefore, in a state of drive which is optimal for learning.

[2] Discrimination learning refers to the learning of a difference between two stimuli.

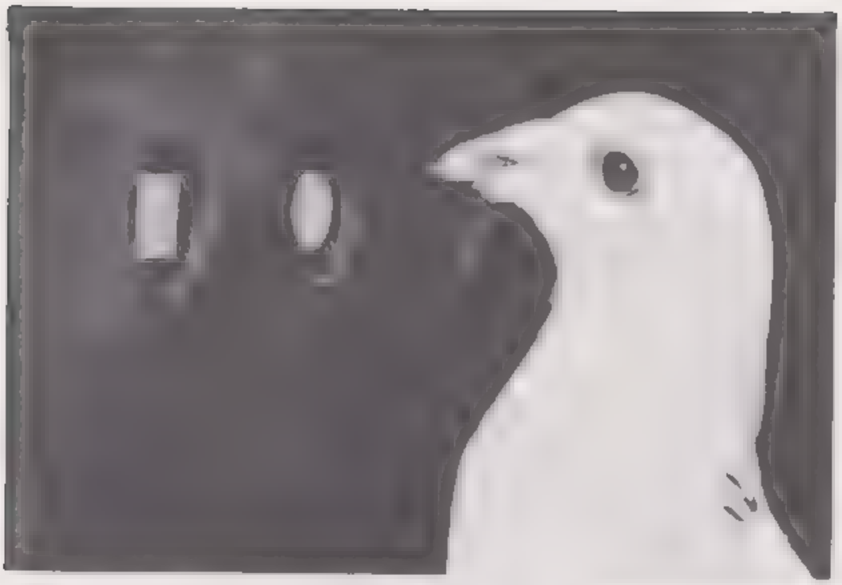

Figure 6.1 The pigeon learns to discriminate between a circle and a square by operant conditioning.

square from the circle, when it can maintain only a low proportion of errors. In this experiment food is called the *reinforcing* agent. It is said to *reinforce* the response.[1]

2.2 Shaping the Response

The experiment described above is a simple one in that we, as experimenters, make use of a natural response of the pigeon (pecking) and simply increase the probability of its occurrence. Now suppose that we require the pigeon to learn something it doesn't normally do very often (if at all). For example we might wish it to flap one wing or point its head backwards. Much the same principles can be used to elicit this new behaviour as were used to teach the pigeon to peck the square rather than the round disc. But there is an important additional technique used which has application in many areas to do with learning. This technique involves reinforcing *approximations* to the behaviour we wish to elicit. Let us begin with a hungry bird, and observe its general activity as before. Eventually, by chance, the bird will move its head slightly backwards, perhaps to relieve an itch, or for some other reason of no special consequence. As soon as the pigeon does this let it be presented with a pellet of food. This response is not exactly what we want but merely an approximation to it. Therefore, after a few reinforcements of vague approximation to the 'perfect' response we would wait until the bird made a response a little more like the one we wanted before giving it a pellet of food. Gradually we increase the strictness of our criterion of the approximation until we reach a stage at which we reinforce only the exact response we want. The probability of this response will increase as a function of the number of reinforcements, until a stage is reached when the pigeon will be walking around with its head held permanently backwards. In this manner we could arrange for the bird to make almost any response of which it was physically capable.

2.3 Intermittent Reinforcement

The experiments quoted above are of course artificial in that special circumstances are arranged in which the learning can occur. In everyday existence, for pigeons as for men, learning is accomplished under much less rigorous conditions. More often than not the reinforcement which is received on executing a response is *intermittent*, in that it does not always occur when the response is made. A child does not always receive praise when it says 'Please' at the right time; a mouse is not always rewarded for his trip to the larder. Skinner has found that in many cases intermittent reinforcement is a more powerful tool by means of which to maintain a high response rate than reinforcement presented for every 'correct' response made.

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[1] This process is called *operant or instrumental conditioning*. For a discussion of this form of conditioning and of so-called classical conditioning see Hilgard and Atkinson, Chapter 11.

In an experiment on intermittent reinforcement, the pigeon (or any other animal for that matter) is first taught a given response, then it is reinforced only occasionally for making the response. The experiment may use one or two basic types of intermittent reinforcement. In 'fixed-interval' reinforcement the animal is reinforced at particular *intervals of time* irrespective of the *number* of correct responses it has made. In 'fixed-ratio' reinforcement the animal is reinforced after making a predetermined *number* of responses, for example after 10, 20 or 50 pecks. Fixed ratio reinforcement is particularly effective in making the pigeon 'work' hard for its reward. Highly trained animals will make hundreds of responses between reinforcements. (Like the factory worker may make thousands of operations upon the products on a conveyor belt before his weekly reinforcement arrives in the form of money!)[1]

2.4 Reinforcement in Child Training

Reinforcement from the parent in the form of expressions of pleasure, praise, head patting, smiling, etc., is probably the most powerful agent at work in shaping the child's behaviour so that it conforms to the standards of the society into which it happens to have been born. Of particular relevance to the socialisation of the child are the principles of *shaping the responses* and *intermittent reinforcement*.

It is the traditionally held view of the learning theorists that virtually all human behaviour is learned and as such must have been formed in the first instance by reinforcement of the child's behaviour by the parent and other people of importance to the child. We can see reinforcement at work in any household with young children and babies. The baby with wind makes a face, the mother cries out with glee and hugs the child for 'smiling'. It may, of course, not be wind. The child may smile, 'instinctively' making an inborn social response; all the same if it is to continue as part of the child's repertoire of responses it will have to be reinforced. If it is wind, reinforcement from the mother will not continue very long unless the smile begins to look more like a smile, and unless it is generated at the appropriate time. In this manner the social smile will be *shaped*, by first reinforcing an approximation to it 'wind' and then becoming stricter in terms of the actual response desired. Similarly, the child may utter a random noise, which sounds like 'Mamma'. This speech sound is reinforced by the mother's cries of delight. But (efficient experimenter that she is) she is unlikely to reinforce the crude sounding 'Mamma' for very long. She will soon begin shaping the response until a perfect sounding 'Mamma' is produced. She will not be content with one word of course. All meaningful sounding utterances will be reinforced, and when the child's vocabulary is still very small it will begin to construct meaningful sentences, by means of which he can communicate with the mother. As the child learns that he can get a good deal of what he wants by asking for it, he will begin to construct more and more complex communications, and these efforts will, of course, be reinforced by their success. Notice that if the mother understands the child's utterances too easily, she may well find herself with a late talker, because the child's speech will not have been shaped by the parent. On the other hand, if the mother fails to understand the earlier communications she will be delaying the early learning of language by not reinforcing the approximations. So some intermediate strategy is best for quick and efficient proficiency in language.

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[1] The difference between fixed interval and fixed ratio reinforcement is broadly similar to the distinction between hourly wages and piece work

It is noteworthy that the mother in general uses intermittent rather than continual reinforcement. She is usually busy and when the child makes responses of a socially approved kind, they are not always recognised as such, and also not recognised as attempts on the part of the child to gain reinforcement. From the animal experiments we quoted it would appear that such intermittent reinforcement is probably optimal for maintaining 'desirable' behaviour on the part of the child.

3 HOW TO STOP A CHILD DOING THINGS

3.1 Negative Reinforcement and Non-reinforcement

So far we have been concerned with exploring how to teach the child to do what we wanted it to do. We have not yet examined the means by which undesirable behaviour can be prevented.

Suppose we have trained a rat to press a lever by providing food as the reward. How can we reverse the process so that the rat gives up the lever-pressing behaviour? Basically, there are two ways. We can give the animal an electric shock every time it touches the lever; this is called *negative reinforcement*, or we can simply stop providing the food (*non-reinforcement*). Under either condition the behaviour will change in the required direction but, although the outcome is superficially the same, there is a vital difference between the two procedures. By punishing the rat we do not erase the earlier habit, we teach the rat to suppress or inhibit the response. It remembers *not* to make the response. Under certain conditions the lever-pressing will reappear in full strength. Non-reinforcement, however, leads to genuine extinction of the response – it is simply dropped from the repertoire and a further training programme is needed to reinstate the lever-pressing behaviour.

3.2 Using Positive Reinforcement

This simple distinction between negative and non-reinforcement has far-reaching implications for the shaping of a child's behaviour. By punishing a child it is possible to modify his behaviour, but in the limited sense that the child will inhibit the punished response only so long as it continues to be associated with punishment. If the behaviour we wish to modify has been acquired through association with a reward of some kind, then in principle all we have to do to produce permanent extinction of the response is to discover what reward is operating and remove it. This is often easier said than done. Firstly, because the kinds of secondary rewards that operate with human beings are legion, often subtle, and hence difficult to pin-point. Secondly, it is sometimes not practicable to remove the reward.

For instance, we might wish to discourage a child from lying or stealing. Unfortunately, the motives for lying or stealing are not always obvious. Furthermore, we may succeed in tracing the nature of the reward the child is seeking and find that the source is controlled by others. The child might, for example, want to be thought daring or defiant by his peer group, and unless we have access to the sub-culture of his gang we cannot influence his values and thereby alter the reward system.

On the whole, though, this is too gloomy a picture. Within the family the adults do control most of the rewards, and if little Johnny starts to produce some undesirable behaviour the first question we should ask ourselves is: 'Did I teach him this response? If so how did I teach him to acquire it? What is he responding to?'

3·3 A Child's Fear of the Dark

Let us take a simple example. Many children learn to fear the dark, often carrying this fear into their adult lives. Who teaches them? Usually their parents. If a young child is left in the dark he does not initially find this an unpleasant experience. Sooner or later, however, he will be unhappy about some other state of affairs such as being hungry, cold, wet, having a tummy ache or bumping his head. Naturally enough, the child cries for mother, and this source of well-being and comfort comes to his aid, *putting on the light as she enters the room.* It would be difficult to devise a better conditioning procedure for associating darkness with a distressing state of affairs and light with a large positive reinforcement in the shape of mother, his guardian angel.

If she does not wish to train him to fear the dark all she need do is to enter the room without putting on the light, talking to him and comforting him until she has ascertained the trouble and then, if necessary, putting the light on to remedy the situation. Handled in this fashion there is no consistent relationship between the arrival or presence of mother and the light.

All very well, you may say, but supposing the child has already learned to fear the dark. Can the process be reversed? Here the inappropriateness of punishment is plain enough. You cannot beat a child out of his fear, although you might succeed in beating him into submission so that he learns to keep his fear to himself. More than likely both you and the child will pay a price for this, both in terms of new symptoms that appear to take the place of the repressed fear[1] and, even more important, in the damage done to the relationship between the parent and the child.

The alternative approach would be to accept that the child has acquired a fear of the dark that is perfectly genuine so far as the child is concerned, and set about reshaping his behaviour with the use of positive reinforcement for responses you wish to encourage and non-reinforcement for the responses you aim to extinguish. You might, for instance, leave the light on for the child to get to sleep, switching it off when the child is asleep, and leaving the door open with a light on outside so that the child will not wake up in total darkness. To obviate sudden distress on the child's part you could explain the game to the child and make sure that the child knows how to switch on the light for himself should he wake up and want it on. When sleep supervenes you can again turn the light off. Because the situation is under the child's control there will be no call for panic reactions. Given sufficient patience on your side, the child will eventually get tired of leaving the comfort of his bed in order to switch on the light, and will decide that there is more profit and sense in going back to sleep with the light off.

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[1] It was the Freudian view (and one which has subsequently been shown to be largely valid) that removing a neurotic symptom by hypnosis or punishment leaves the cause of the symptom undisturbed. As a result other outlets are used. Thus the child afraid of the dark may if punished revert to bed wetting or some other symptom, which may not be obvious.

The essence of the operation is that you should in no way suggest that you are putting the light off in order to punish the child. Once it becomes a contest of wills you have defeated your original purpose of enlisting the child's own energies in the socialisation process.

Another way of achieving the same objective would be to use a lamp that can be placed on the floor and moved progressively by indiscernible steps out of the room, a little further each night.

By now the reader may be wondering if the laws of learning as derived from rats or pigeons can in all cases be used to shape the behaviour of the child. In so far as we confine ourselves to the simple learning procedures outlined, the laws are applicable. There is, nevertheless, at least one critical distinction between shaping the behaviour of a rat and shaping the behaviour of a child. With the child, as a rule, we have a *personal relationship*, and this we can choose to build on during the shaping process, or to destroy.

There are many circumstances in which positive reinforcement and non-reinforcement cannot be relied on to do the job unaided. No matter how permissive we may wish to be towards the child – and this is not to suggest that total permissiveness is always in the child's best interests – there are situations, such as crossing the road or playing with razor blades, when we cannot afford to let events run their course. Young children must stay off the road until they have acquired sufficient traffic sense to cross it. If the adult does not supply the negative reinforcement in such cases, then the traffic will.

3.4 Physical Punishment

Negative reinforcement comes in many guises, and if there is one principle that has been established by scientific investigation time and again it is that physical violence is the least effective form of negative reinforcement when it comes to shaping a child's behaviour. All the evidence to date – and there is a considerable body of it by now[1] – shows that physical methods of punishment (the deliberate infliction of pain on the child) may for the time being inhibit the behaviour that it is meant to stamp out, but the long-term effects are less impressive. Violence begets violence. What the child learns is that might is right. Delinquents have more commonly been the victims of adult assaults – often of a vicious, persistent and even calculated nature – than non-delinquents. Boys who have been caned at school for smoking are more likely to increase their smoking than those not caned.

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[1] For reviews see: R. C. Johnson and G. R. Medinnus, *Child Psychology: Behaviour and Development* (Wiley, 1965), pp. 132–6; M. Argyle, *Psychology and Social Problems* (Methuen, 1964), pp. 56, 123–4; R. Brown, *Social Psychology* (Collier-Macmillan, 1965), pp. 384–94.

To quote a classical study by R. R. Sears *et al.*, *Patterns of Child Rearing* (Row, Peterson, 1957), p. 484:

> The unhappy effects of (physical) punishment have run like a dismal thread through our findings. Mothers who punished aggressive behaviour severely had more aggressive children than mothers who punished lightly. Mothers who punished toilet accidents severely ended up with bed wetting children. Mothers who punished dependency to get rid of it had more dependent children than mothers who did not punish. Harsh physical punishment was associated with high childhood aggressiveness and with the development of feeding problems. Our evaluation of punishment is that it is ineffectual over the long term as a technique for eliminating the kind of behaviour towards which it is directed.

The trouble with physical punishment is fourfold:

(a) It only inhibits behaviour.
(b) It creates resentment.
(c) It has unfortunate long-term effects.
(d) It blocks communication, both because of the resentment that ensues and because, although it tells the recipient what not to do, it does not indicate, still less reward him for, what he is required to do.

Fortunately, there are other forms of negative reinforcement that are highly effective both in the short and long term. Which brings us back to the relationship the child has with the adult who is attempting to shape the behaviour. Where a good relationship has been established in which the child values the adult and feels valued by the adult, the child's behaviour is influenced by a very simple and powerful device – the withdrawal of approval, or merely the threat of withdrawal.

We are talking now about the secondary reinforcing agents attached to the acquired or social needs discussed in Chapter 5 of Hilgard and Atkinson. Money is a secondary reinforcing agent, and a very commanding one, too. But affection, where it has taken root, is many times more imperious in its dominion over our behaviour. Emotional ties dominate our lives to an unsuspected degree. They provide the gossamer thread that binds us to the larger purposes of the social contract. Without them human behaviour could not be shaped in any significant direction, and society as we like to think of it would not exist.

4 IMITATION, IDENTIFICATION AND RÔLE-LEARNING

As we have attempted to show, the work of the 'reinforcement' theorists (and particularly the work of Skinner) is characterised by a mechanistic stimulus – response approach in which the acquisition of behaviour is explained in terms of a history of reinforcements. In other words, behaviour is viewed as a function of forces applied to the child and other authorities suggest that this approach ignores that the child is an active *participant* in his socialisation (which we have previously defined as a process of *interaction*) and that he undergoes a cognitive and 'moral' development which makes it likely that learning also takes place through processes not so far explained in this Unit. We will look at some of these now.

4.1 Imitation

Imitation of others is so common that some early theorists thought of it as a human instinct. Today there is still controversy as to whether the capacity to imitate is learned or not.

We all know of instances of children who imitate their parents and siblings or other persons valued as ideals in some manner. They tend to have the mannerisms of father, the intonation and favourite phrases of mother, the same accent as members of their peer group. They repeat words whose meaning is obviously misunderstood. They can copy perfectly new words after hearing them once. Facts such as these make it difficult, for instance, to explain all human language development in terms of reinforcement. If all learning depended solely on the selective reinforcement and shaping of 'original' responses randomly emitted by the child the behavioural repertoire of the child would remain severely limited. If one accepts, then, that imitative behaviour is common,one still has to explain under what conditions or for what reasons it takes place.

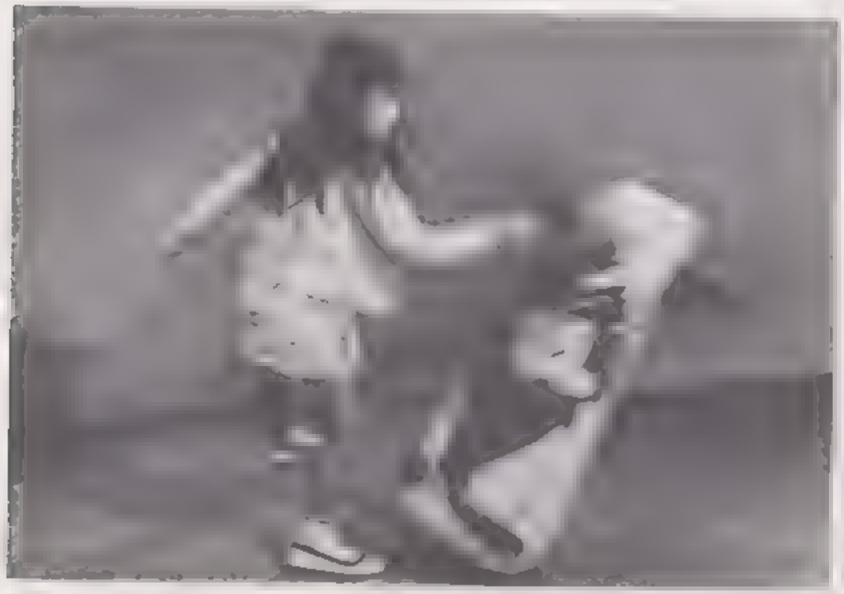

Figure 6.9 The child imitates the aggressive behaviour of the model, in this an adult who, as we see in the TV programme for this Unit, has been seen by the child to beat the doll

A very important difference between learning by imitation and learning through 'operant conditioning' is that the former depends on the presence of an actual or symbolic *model* whose behaviour is imitated. Such imitation may take place just out of curiosity but is more likely to happen because the child can see that the *model* is in some way rewarded for his behaviour. Or else, the *learner* is rewarded when he matches the behaviour of the model. (He is rewarded by the model, others, or by himself in that he receives *vicarious* (that is second-hand) reinforcement by being like the model). Thus we can see that 'selective reinforcement' underlies the processes of imitation – the two concepts used to explain acquisition of behaviour are not mutually exclusive. But the presence of and the relationship one may have with a model is of crucial importance. It is often observed, for instance, that fatherless boys have greater difficulty in adopting a full adult male rôle than boys not so handicapped. If the learning of the adult male rôle depended solely on selective reinforcement of desirable ways of behaving, the child should have no need for a model of the same sex – all he would need is a mother willing and able to encourage the 'correct' masculine behaviour.

One does not know exactly why fatherless boys are more likely to have these problems of finding a male identity. Is it the lack of a masculine model? Is it that the mother serves as a model in spite of what she *says* about what boys should or should not do? Or does she, because of her loneliness, encourage dependency in her son? Whichever of these suggested explanations is the most appropriate it is apparent that sex rôles are not learned by shaping and reinforcement of behaviour alone.

We have already commented on the adverse effects of punishment as negative reinforcement – in the present context it is worthwhile pointing out that one of the possible reasons why it is so frequently found that physical punishment, far from stamping out behaviour appears to lead to aggressive behaviour on the part of the punished child may well be due to the fact that the child models himself on the parent and reproduces his behaviour.

As we have stated, imitation depends on the presence of an actual or symbolic model. Many laboratory experiments have been carried out to establish under what conditions a person becomes a model to be imitated. Such experiments show, for instance, that children who had seen films of adults behaving in various striking, novel, unusual or aggressive ways tended to copy the behaviour of *those* adults who were shown to be rewarded for their behaviour or who were seen to be powerful. However it was also demonstrated (Bandura and Walters, 1963) that there is a difference between *learning* and *performing* behaviour. When the children were offered rewards for *copying* the observed behaviour they could equally well copy the distinctive behaviour of the model who had been punished in the film. In other words, they had observed and absorbed the behaviour of all the persons in the film but without special incentives they had felt less inclined to reproduce the behaviour of the punished or less powerful models in the experiment.

These kinds of experiments illustrate under what *laboratory* conditions children tend to imitate, at any rate in the short run, the behaviour of one rather than another model. In real life we are surrounded by many people and as psychologists we should be able to advance hypotheses intended to explain why some of these matter more to us than do others and hence serve as 'models'.

4.2 Identification

The concept of *identification* and theories associated with the process of identification may throw a light on this problem.

The concept of identification was originally proposed by Freud in a number of his writings. His best known elaboration of the concept links identification closely with the resolution of the so-called Oedipus complex and the development of a conscience (Freud, 1949). To resolve the anxieties caused by his jealousy of the father (whom he sees as a rival for his mother's affection) the young boy 'identifies' with his father, 'introjects' his values and *becomes like him*. In this way, his fear of his father is reduced and he can enjoy his mother's love vicariously. This proposition does two things: it attempts to explain the continuity of values across generations and it shows how the boy (though originally perhaps having closer links with his mother since she cares for him) comes to adopt a male identity.

Whether or not one accepts this explanation[1] the concept of identification is useful in describing the acceptance of another person's values and attitudes. It is this usage which the concept now has in the general body of psychological terminology. It is usually used to refer to the adoption of values and complex patterns of behaviour through intimate personal relationships with a model. The word 'imitation' is usually used to refer to the imitation or copying of specific items of behaviour as in the experiments by Bandura and others to which we made reference.

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[1] This 'explanation' is not a scientific hypothesis since it can neither be proved nor disproved through unequivocal experimentation: it is an imaginative interpretation of the clinical data at Freud's disposal.

Later writers have produced other explanations to account for identification. Whiting (1960), for instance, has suggested that *status envy* can lead to identification with another. Here envy is not thought of as arising out of sexual jealousy and rivalry – it is much more broadly and perhaps less interestingly conceived as envy of another who controls resources or has abilities the child wants but lacks himself. We have already seen that there is some experimental evidence for *imitation* under these conditions. It is only fair to point out that some authors who do not like abstract concepts (or hypothesised intervening processes) equate imitation and identification, taking the outward behaviour as being the visible sign of the invisible inward process of identification.

More interesting perhaps than the concept of status envy is the notion of '*developmental*' identification. The original Freudian account of the process of identification shows it as happening through fear and out of emotional conflict. Identification then could be thought of as being *defensive*. Developmental identification (a concept used by more recent writers) on the other hand is thought of as arising from a *positive* relationship with a person on whom one is originally dependent and whom one wishes to be like. The interesting thing about this concept is that it can also be derived from learning theory propositions. One can assume that stimuli associated with a stimulus which is followed by reinforcement themselves become reinforcing. The child therefore comes to associate the satisfaction of his bodily needs with the presence of his mother who in the terminology of learning theorists acquires 'secondary reward value'. By imitating her (developmental identification) the child rewards himself.

The student may well feel that neither defensive nor developmental identification are concepts he finds helpful in understanding social learning. They are hypothetical concepts and in the nature of things must remain so. However, these perhaps unsatisfactory concepts cannot be abandoned since much of human learning cannot be explained in terms of the concepts of the 'reinforcement' theorists discussed earlier in this Unit, such as shaping of behaviour and reinforcement. This is a quite general problem of explanation in psychology; so much of what one aims to understand is due to 'intervening' variables or processes which remain hidden and therefore hypothetical.

4·3 Role Learning

We say that 'man is father to the child' (or not, as the case may be). But why and how? No full answer can be given to this question but here is one further suggested explanation: the child learns through real or phantasy *rôle playing*. In order to perform one's own rôle one must necessarily learn the rôles which are complementary to one's own rôles. The child learns the mother's rôle (her ways of behaving, her attitudes and values), the pupil learns the teacher's rôle, the house-hunter the estate-agent's rôle. This does not mean that we will adopt these rôles, merely that we *learn* these rôles and that we may at some time behave in accordance with one or other rôle in our behavioural repertoire.

5 REARING THE CHILD

5.1 Learning and the Family

Since the earliest influences upon the child are brought to bear within the family, it is this aspect of the socialisation process that requires closer examination. In this section, therefore, we shall look more closely into child-rearing practices to see how society goes about inculcating its values, attitudes and behaviour patterns in the child.

Because most human behaviour is learned through personal or vicarious experience, man is able to adapt *as an individual* to a great variety of environmental demands. Because his behaviour is not instinctive, not wired into his nervous system in a definite and unchangeable manner, it is highly flexible. It is this plasticity of man's behaviour, a concomitant of his extraordinarily developed cerebral cortex, that makes him the biologically successful creature he is. He starts to learn from birth, and continues to learn almost to his death.

His early learning has to occur without the special learning advantages that go with language. Although his mother uses language, in her attempts to communicate, and although the child is probably well equipped anatomically to hear the speech sounds, he cannot perceive them in the sense that an adult does. He probably cannot hear words within a sentence as distinct pieces of language, and of course he cannot comprehend the meaning of the utterances.

His mother may also be learning the skills of motherhood, attempting to understand the child's needs by the manner in which he is behaving. When he cries, does he have wind or is he hungry? Why does he make crude movements towards his ear with his hand; does he have earache? and so on. Some of the main learning situations which a child undergoes in his early years have been classified under the following four headings:

1. Feeding
2. Toilet Training
3. Sexual Expression
4. Aggressive Tendencies.

A fifth and perhaps overriding learning situation is the development of language, which in some perhaps small measure will be used as a training aid in all the situations listed above. There is, of course, ample scope for 'error' in the method of training used in these situations, and it has been said that such errors influence subsequent behaviour to a large extent.

In the section in the *Reader* (pp. 109–21) that is taken from Dollard and Miller's *Personality and Psychotherapy* (1950) a fairly detailed account of four of the important learning situations already mentioned is presented. In each of these situations the child is dependent on the mother for guidance in learning to deal with biologically based drives that can be satisfied within society only by complying with certain demands of the social environment. The child has to learn what to eat, when to eat and how to eat; when and how to eliminate waste products from its body; what sort of sexual behaviour will be tolerated or approved under what circumstances; and how, not only to control aggressive impulses, but how to give them effective

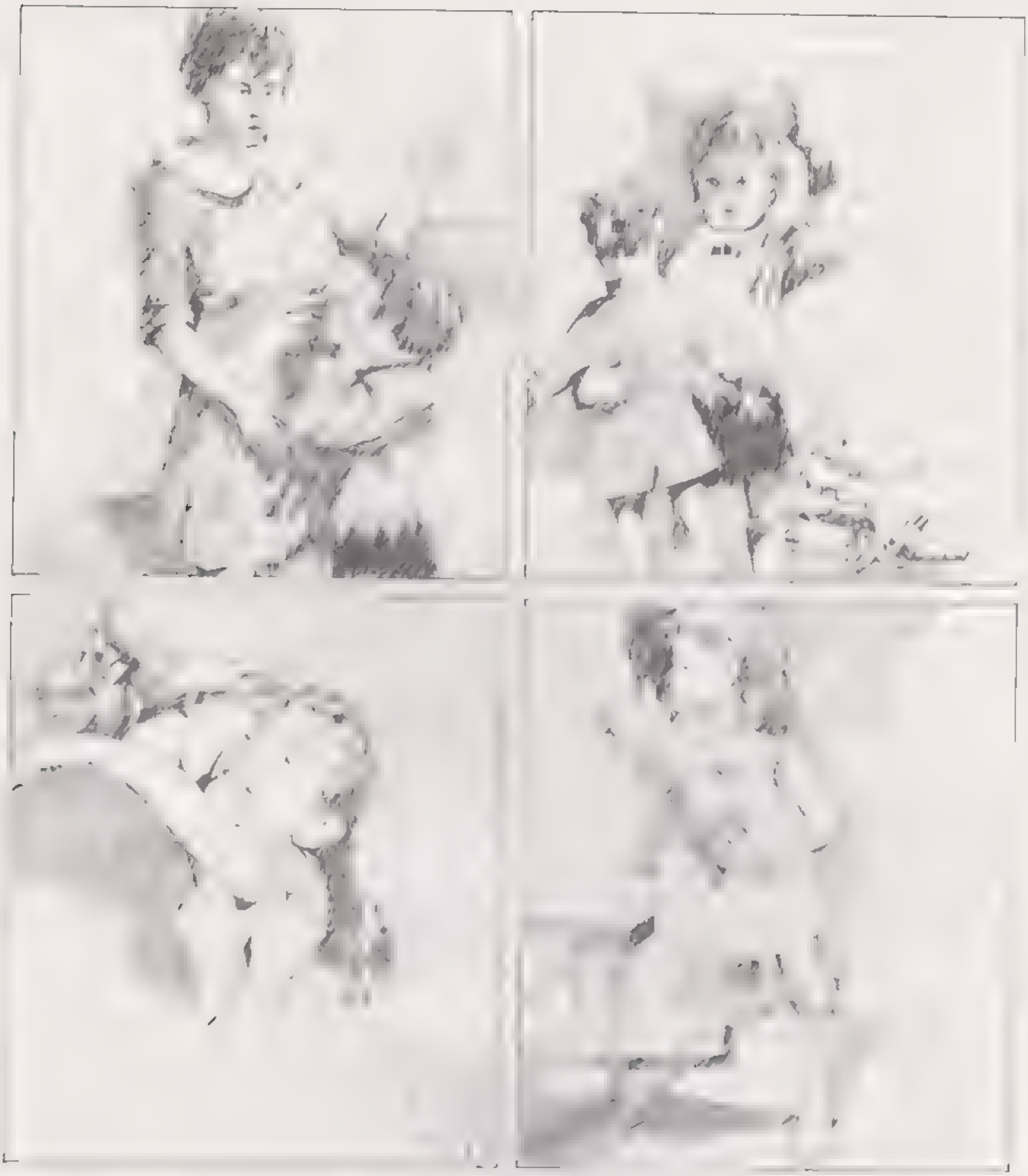

Figure 6.3 Rôle playing. One of the ways in which learning takes place is through rôle playing. The child can be seen to act the mother's rôle towards her own doll and in doing so imitates the mother's behaviour.

expression within the bounds permitted by others.

In each of these broad situations, the social demands are not altogether without contradictions. Not only does the child have to learn to conform to rules, he also has to learn the logical contradictions inherent in the complex systems of rules.

Since not every parent recognises these contradictions explicitly there is the risk that the child will be socialised into what are essentially conflict situations without being supplied with the means to resolve the conflict.

5.2 Sexual Expression

With regard to sex for example, a great many societies operate a double standard. There is the ideal, to which we in our society pay lip service, of adult monogamous sex only within marriage, and the actual practice which in many instances deviates some way from the professed ideal. Part of this double standard also reflects our different attitudes towards the male and female rôles.

Although, in a sense, it is accepted that a young man will sow his wild oats, a less tolerant attitude is adopted towards young girls. Just how the young man is to engage in these pursuits without involving a person of the opposite sex is not always made clear. One of the more popular solutions resorted to by many societies is the institution of the prostitute. But here, again, the double standard operates. Prostitution is surrounded by legal and moral sanctions that both accept and reject it. It is considered socially useful, since it provides a sexual outlet, yet at the same time it is morally condemned.

5.3 Aggressive Impulses

The conflict that is built into our procedures for socialising aggressive impulses derives from the difficulties inherent in learning to co-operate within a competitive society.[1] Many subtle discriminations have to be acquired about when to compete and when to co-operate and, beyond that, how to compete or co-operate in given circumstances.

Very often we are required to do both at the same time. Whether taking an exam or running in a race – obviously competitive situations – we are expected to observe certain rules laid down by society, some stated, others implied. So we co-operate by presenting ourselves at the right time and place and compete according to the rules. If we are caught cheating we expect to be penalised. Yet in any competitive game with formal rules, from rugby to bridge, there is a shadowy area in which the rules get bent by the individual who is keen to win. Many a rugby player has lost his front teeth in the confusion of a lively scrum, and many a bridge player has felt constrained to offer jaundiced comments about his opponents' techniques for conveying information.

Small wonder that some people decide to opt out of competitive situations insofar as this is possible. Small wonder also that others are less than enthusiastic about the co-operative aspect of social behaviour. It is a delicate tight-rope we are called upon to tread and it would take a skilled acrobat to keep his balance under all the diverse social conditions that present themselves. Sometimes there is no solution possible even in principle. Indeed such complex situations can produce severe emotional disorders if the victim fails to realise that he is faced with an impossible task that cannot be resolved by any efforts on his part.

5.4 Feeding and Toilet Training

To go back to the other two areas of early child training procedures, feeding and toilet training, such issues as demand versus schedule feeding of infants,[1] early versus late weaning, in what manner and when infants should undergo toilet training, have all been investigated experimentally. It is only fair to point out that the evidence in favour of one method rather than another is inconclusive, despite convincing polemic from the child care 'experts' riding their favourite hobby horses. Straightforward, one-to-one relationships between child-rearing techniques and later outcomes in terms of personality development are probably myths born of a tidy mind rather than a true reflection of the untidy facts. About the only conclusion it would be safe to draw concerning early influences is that a well-cuddled baby is more likely to be a happy baby. In other words, it is the general atmosphere of loving care to which the infant responds.

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[1] See M. Mead (ed.), *Co-operation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples* (1937).

6 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE

The higher animals can imitate behaviour, but it is very doubtful that even the anthropoid apes can identify with another model in human fashion, lacking as they do the symbolic processes mediated by language. Identification appears to play a central rôle in the development of what we loosely refer to as 'conscience'. When we use 'conscience' in this loose sense we tend to imply that it has a unitary quality – as if a man either did or did not have a conscience. This usage probably derives in part from earlier ideas that attributed conscience as a gift of God vouchsafed only to mankind by a deity.

Again, it was Freud who offered the first serious challenge to this view. He saw conscience as developing in line with the social pressures brought to bear upon the young child, especially within the family. Once a deep emotional bond has been established between the child and its parents, any threat to the continuation of this bond provokes almost intolerable anxiety within the child. Parental disapproval and the threat, implied or explicit, of the withdrawal of love becomes a powerful force for the shaping of the child's behaviour. What the parent sees as right and wrong is transmitted to the child day after day in a vast variety of circumstances. Sometimes the instruction is formal and systematic, as with the Ten Commandments; more frequently it is informal and, to an extent, fortuitous, as when the child learns that taking money from its mother's purse is regarded as 'stealing', as against grabbing a cake off the table which is just 'bad manners'. Either piece of behaviour may evoke a sharp reaction from the parent who makes it clear that approval is contingent upon the child's abandoning that sort of act, controlling the impulse and substituting another form of behaviour that is considered 'correct' by the parent. So the child learns to ask instead of grabbing and to regard money as 'belonging' to its 'owner'. In a while these attitudes and the corresponding behaviour become second nature to the child. Rather than risk the loss of love, the values of the loved one are incorporated in the child's own value system. Thus, by a process of identification the child gradually develops a conscience.

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[1] Demand feeding consists of the presentation of food to babies, when they are hungry. This may range a good deal over the normally accepted four hourly feed. Schedule feeding consists of presentation of the food at strict intervals, irrespective of whether the child is hungry at the time or whether for several hours beforehand he has been crying with hunger.

The essential difference between these internalised values and behaviour that is controlled by an outside agent whom the child obeys only out of fear becomes apparent when the child is on its own. If the child refrains from stealing only because it fears the consequence of being caught, then once the supervision is relaxed the child will steal, provided there is a reasonable chance of getting away with it. If, on the other hand, the child has identified with and accepted the values of a loved model, then even when there is no chance of being found out its behaviour will be controlled by 'the still small voice' of conscience. Hence the futility of trying to beat 'good behaviour' into a child. All that happens is that the 'bad' behaviour is suppressed in the presence of the beater whose values, far from being internalised, are more likely to be rejected by the resentful child.

Applying what we know of the principles of reinforcement and the concepts of imitation, identification and rôle playing it is not difficult to see how delinquent behaviour can arise. Very briefly, this might come about in three ways; no model with which to identify, a 'bad' model, and an inconsistent model. The no-model condition is one where the child has been rejected, that is psychologically abandoned, by its parents so that there is no opportunity to develop the deep emotional ties upon which identification is based. Asocial and anti-social behaviour is a logical consequence of an affectionless upbringing.

Dickens' Fagin is a prime fictional example of a bad model, but one that is not so far removed from the reality of some households even today. In the social environment of a thieves' kitchen the child learns to become an accomplished thief. There is no guilt attached to stealing. On the contrary, the child is socialised into a sub-culture in which competent thieving is highly valued and respected.

More commonly, though, much delinquent behaviour, especially of the milder petty kind, is traceable to inconsistent behaviour on the part of an otherwise suitable parental model. It is not unusual for a thoughtless parent to give a child a pocketful of change to play with and then be puzzled and shocked when the child treats coins like other toys and does not respect the sanctity of its mother's or anyone else's purse. If the child has been allowed to treat toys as being of small value, to be seized, destroyed, lost or abandoned according to its passing fancies, then it should not be altogether surprising to find that it takes some time to learn the value of money in the more responsible adult sense.

Even more strangely, the 'good' parent will often take considerable pains to teach the child to lie; 'Now say you're sorry,' when the child is patently feeling anything but remorse. Later on the child has to learn more sophisticated forms of social lying that are disguised and sanctified by labelling them as 'tact'.

Conscience, then, has many sides to it. Distinctions might be made between a 'conventional' conscience, the sort that subscribes, without too much soul searching, to a set of values and code of behaviour that have been taken over lock, stock and barrel from the authority figures in a child's life; a 'considered' conscience, the sort manifested by people concerned with moral issues, arrived at by a process of careful weighing of the problems involved – leaders like Gandhi and philosophers like Spinoza might be put forward as archetypes in this genre; an 'empathic' conscience, the sort that quickens spontaneously to the needs and sufferings of others at an intuitive, emotional level with no recourse to linguistic or conceptual analysis; and perhaps also a 'formal liberal' conscience, the sort that beats an indignant breast over the injustices done to negroes, Jews, criminals, the poor, the halt, the blind and any other disadvantaged minority – just so long as they do not come to live next door.

Man's moral behaviour is often held to be one of his most central attributes, setting him apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. In our everyday life this holds true enough, but too much store should not be set by the boast. Under conditions of extreme stress, where social constraints have broken down, as in a concentration camp or in any country in the immediate aftermath of an overwhelming military defeat, the veneer of civilisation is apt to wear a little thin. If the Bomb were ever to arrive, shredding the social fabric, there might be some painful surprises lying in wait for the survivors, including the discovery that the dictum that 'nature is red in tooth and claw' does not stop short at man, but applies throughout the animal kingdom.

7 LEARNING TO BE MALE AND FEMALE

Now that we have considered some of the difficulties associated with the socialisation of the very young child within a family we can proceed to look at an example of a rather more extended socialisation process that starts within the family, but which is carried on in the larger world of school and peer groups and which, to some extent, continues throughout life. This is the learning of the male and female rôles.

In some respects this may sound a curious statement. Surely little boys grow into men and little girls grow into women? How else could matters be arranged? As a matter of fact, matters can be, and are, arranged very differently in other parts of the world. Our concept of what is 'natural' to men and 'natural' to women, like many of our concepts, is culture bound. What we think of as 'natural' is simply what we are used to.

In other words, sexual identity is not *biologically* inevitable; it is partly a product of social learning in the family and wider community.

Almost from birth we treat boys and girls differently (blue for a boy, pink for a girl); making different demands on them and inducing different sets of expectations. We give them different sorts of toys to play with (boys are not encouraged to play with dolls, they get tool sets instead), teach them different games, recreations and hobbies (ballet for girls, rugger for boys), dress them differently, cut their hair differently, choose their names accordingly, and so on. Boys are expected to be rough and tough ('Boys don't cry'), to take risks and to be assertive, girls to be quiet, gentle and decorous and keep their knees together when seated. Boys who do not conform to the stereotype are 'cissies', and girls who try to break free from the female rôle are 'tomboys'. A lot of social pressure is spent in making sure that most of us conform to these rôles.

The ten-year-old boy who continues to seek comfort in his mother's lap is usually discouraged, if not by his mother, then by nearly everyone else. His twin sister may reasonably expect to be indulged by the father in parallel circumstances.

Conforming to our expectations, boys are more likely to grow up overtly aggressive. We do not expect little girls to learn to use their fists. Women, therefore, have to find other outlets for their aggressive impulses that are acceptable in our society. Malicious gossip is one possibility. The social stereotype of the shrew with an edge to her tongue is not an accident of nature, but a reflection of our culture pattern. It is interesting to note that, given the anonymity and social distance provided by a car, women can be just as forceful and aggressive as men on the road.

Expectations with regard to adult rôles are supplied so that as a man the boy knows he will have to earn a living. As she pushes her dolls around in a toy pram a girl, on the other hand, knows that as a woman she will be expected to marry and have children. This does not preclude the possibility of working, either as a prelude to or as a part of marriage, but the priorities are different. The jobs that are open to her and her prospects of promotion also serve to emphasise the complementary rôles of breadwinner and *Hausfrau.* Both boys and girls are usually led to expect that sexual gratification as an adult will be found with the opposite sex. All of these socialisation processes, it should be noted, including sex typing, are subject to idiosyncratic influences, so that boys are sometimes found playing with dolls and girls sometimes learn to use their fists.

So, although in our society it is 'natural' for men to be more aggressive than women, this tells us something about our society and very little about human nature. In other societies the sex rôles are arranged differently. In *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, Mead (1967) shows us how one set of child-rearing practices among the hill Arapesh produces what we would regard as a female type of adult in both sexes. A nurturant, protective, permissive, cherishing, non-competitive upbringing produces mild mannered, non-aggressive, placatory and co-operative personalities. The cannibalistic Mundugamor, on the other hand, adopt somewhat violent, unloving child-rearing practices that result in adults with a highly aggressive, untrusting, assertive, dominant disposition that we would regard as 'typically' masculine. The Tchambuli go one better by producing males that play the female rôle in our terms – the men being the domestic creatures, shopping, gossiping, looking after the children, curling their locks and garlanding themselves with flowers while the unadorned women with shaven heads are off hunting and generally carrying out in a determined manner what we like to think of as essentially masculine pursuits.

Animal studies, however, indicate that although aggressiveness is not a monopoly of the male, it is certainly the male of the species who

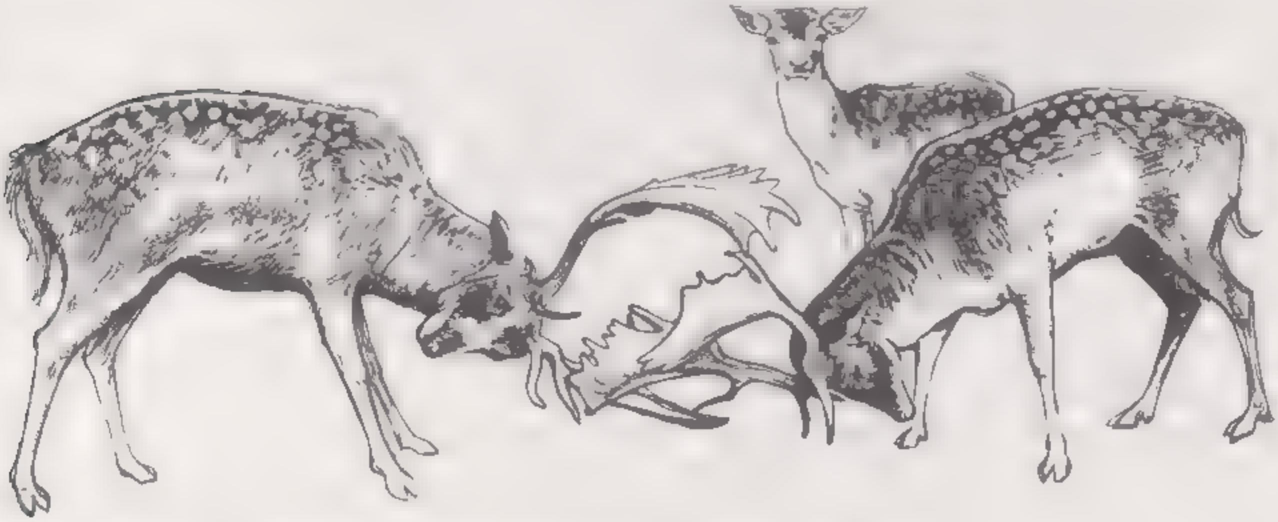

Figure 6.4 The stag, the male of the species, is aggressive; the doe, the female is more passive.

is the more aggressive on nearly all occasions. The most obvious exception to this rule is that of the female defending her young. Injections of male hormones will make a male chimpanzee far more willing to engage in combat. Furthermore, it is easy enough to breed for aggressiveness. So, lower down the phylogenetic scale aggressive behaviour is biologically controlled, being both sex-linked and otherwise genetically transmissible. In the human sphere, unquestionably the male is, on average, the larger and stronger of the two sexes, and is better equipped for fighting in every way.

Mead's work then, although valuable in drawing attention to the overwhelming importance of cultural influences, falls some way short of the truth if we are being invited to believe that there are no differences in the distribution of basic temperamental traits between the sexes. Even among the Arapesh and Tchambuli it transpires, it is the men who are the warriors. No society, present or past, has ever expected women to carry the main responsibility for combat in warfare The Amazons of Greek legend were just that legendary. Individual women have fought alongside men in special circumstances, but it is always the men who are called upon to engage in aggressive fighting.

Ford and Beach, in their chapter in the *Reader* (pp. 121–37) on 'Development in the Individual', emphasise the enormous variety of sexual behaviour that is to be found both within and between different societies. In bygone days, people, even well educated people, were wont to talk about sexual 'perverts' as if some natural law were being offended. Now that we are better informed on these matters we talk euphemistically of sexual 'deviants' to refer in a neutral fashion to the fact that some individuals deviate from the norm for their group. But norms, we now know, vary widely from society to society and from sub-culture to sub-culture within any society so diverse and complex as our own. What is 'normal' behaviour in one social context is deviant in another.

So it would seem that what is 'normal' is so only in relation to a given culture pattern. Homosexuality is thought of as 'abnormal' in our culture pattern, but was regarded as a higher form of sexual relationship by the classical Greeks – a view that finds favour in many Muslim societies to this day.

8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Psychology contributes to an understanding of society by exploring the processes which go into shaping the individual into a member of society. This Unit has been largely concerned with concentrating upon some of the more important of the variables which affect childhood socialisation.

However, although the ideal aim of the socialisation process (if it can be said to 'have an aim'), is to produce the perfectly adapted individual, yet people differ. Because they differ, so each coupling of male and female in a marriage produces a unique social situation into which children are born and raised. As each child is born, so the family changes, because it has a new member. Thus each family differs from all others, and develops with the years and with its growth in number. Because of the uniqueness of each family, the socialisation of the children within it differs, and new personalities emerge. It will be the purpose of Unit 7 to examine the development of personality.

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Unit 7

Personality Development

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PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 6 we concentrated mainly upon the social influences which shape the child's behaviour during the process of socialisation and fit him for life in the culture into which he is born. However, although socialisation tends to work towards producing conformity, and towards making all members of the society similar, there are marked differences between the end-products of this process because there are variations in the child-rearing practices within the culture. Thus, although we may all acquire roughly the same skills, rules and values, there will be differences between people in all of these areas.

However, individual differences are *not entirely* the results of different child-rearing practices: other factors play their part. Thus genetic factors are an important source of variation, since they predispose the individual towards behaving in certain ways. Also, the influence of the ongoing process of maturation must not be forgotten. In addition, learning, maturation and genetic factors interact with each other in producing individual differences, so that the situation is indeed complex. This unit will be concerned mainly with the sources of individual differences – the sources of variation among members of the same society. This is the realm of the study of personality development which involves studying the evolution of the adult structure of personality and the factors which influence this process.

1.1 What is Personality?

First of all, we must state what is meant by the term personality. Most people seem to understand the concept – at least intuitively, but its precise definition gives them some difficulty. Certainly psychologists have found this a difficult task and there is not a single definition which *all* psychologists would accept as covering the concept completely. Perhaps the most widely quoted definition was proposed in 1937 by G. W. Allport: 'Personality is the dynamic organisation within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behaviour and thought.' In other words, personality is the unique integration of an individual's motives, expectancies, values, beliefs, aspirations, feelings, interests and attitudes which determine his behaviour and which enable us to distinguish him from other men.

According to this kind of definition an accurate description of personality would involve a statement about the personality *as a whole*. This brings to light a fundamental question – should one try to study individual cases, or should one attempt to find general laws i.e. should one adopt a generalising (*nomothetic*) approach, or an individualising (*idiographic*) approach to the study of personality? Most of the science of psychology seeks to establish general laws of behaviour and experience and therefore it is nomothetic in approach. However, Allport argues that every personality is unique and one should try to capture this by using an idiographic approach. Other personality theorists, e.g. Eysenck, claim that psychology should be nomothetic throughout and that one should try to establish general laws of personality. In addition, although the study of the unique personality may sound an ideal approach to some, it is an almost impossible task as there is no way of measuring 'a whole personality'. Thus, most theorists, whichever approach they adopt, analyse personality into smaller units. Obviously, these units must be measurable in some way and this immediately presents problems for the psychologist, as you will see in later courses of psychology, should you take them. It is difficult to measure in a reliable or valid way such things as expectancies, hopes and feelings. For this reason, some authors claim that one should study only the readily observable aspects of the individual. Eysenck, for example, in his book *The Scientific Study of Personality* (1952, p. 37) writes that: 'An individual reveals his own personality through any observable event. This would equate "personality" with "sum-total of behaviour". . . . Personality study therefore starts with behaviour, and attempts to find general laws which will explain this behaviour. . . .'

As you can see, this area is full of controversy.

1.2 The Concept of Normality

In studying personality and its development we are concerned mainly with the 'normal' personality. 'Normal' implies many things depending upon your terms of reference; thus from the medical point of view it implies 'well' as opposed to 'unwell'; from the social standpoint it means 'well adjusted' to one's environment; from the moral point of view it can mean 'good' as opposed to 'bad' and for the statistically minded it means 'usual' or 'frequent' as opposed to 'unusual' (i.e. not deviating markedly from the average). When we talk about personality, all four viewpoints are frequently confused and it is a good thing to be aware of this. Each culture has fairly strict limits to what it can tolerate as being 'normal', and whichever viewpoint one chooses, there are striking variations between cultures. Reference to anthropological studies will illustrate this point:

Ruth Benedict in *Patterns of Culture* (1935) considers a number of 'primitive', that is preliterate, societies with social systems that embody very different ideas from our own about what is 'normal'. By our standards, for example, the Dobu are extremely suspicious, so that anyone in our society displaying this amount of suspicion (regarded as normal by the Dobu) would be regarded as ill and in need of psychiatric help. Until recently cannibalistic, their society is based on ill-will, treachery, jealousy, resentment, cruelty and lawlessness – though not of the anarchistic variety. Controlled by magic, violence and double dealing, happiness is an accusation levelled against only the most perfidious of enemies. Exploitative sexual behaviour is matched by an excessive prudery. These are the 'norms'[1] within the Dobu culture, thus any adult behaving this way would be considered to be 'normal' by the Dobu – within our culture, of course, he would be considered abnormal because our norms are different.

Also, traditionally cannibalistic, the Kwakiutl are aggressively competitive to an inordinate degree by *our* standards. Wealth, for example, is used as a weapon to humiliate and subdue competitors. Real wealth in the form of blankets and oil is burned in public ceremonies. Symbolic wealth in the form of copper plates are destroyed before a rival, who must either match the destruction or lose face. Status is attached to property, and efforts to dispose of enemies can extend to homicidal violence and cannibalistic rituals.

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[1] A *norm* refers to the accepted standard patterns of behaviour of a social group.

In sharp contrast are the Zumi – mild mannered, peace loving, sober and inoffensive, they devote themselves to religious ceremonies centred on benevolent magic, mainly to propitiate the gods and petition for rain. Violence and disorder are scorned. Little emphasis is placed on sex as a motive, or economic advantage and possessions as goals. Adultery arouses little passion. Theft is rare, and homicide almost unknown except as embodied in the folklore. They lead a dignified, measured way of life. Giving way is a sign of generosity of spirit, not weakness. Politeness is valued. Arrogance is the cardinal sin.

Thus, you can see that such cross-cultural comparisons reveal tremendous variations in what is considered to be a 'normal personality'.

You will have noticed that in our description of the 'normal' tribesmen of the Dobu and Kwakiutl we used certain adjectives such as aggressive, lawless, violent, sober, etc. These descriptive terms correspond to aspects of personality which are called personality traits[1] they can be thought of as aspects or dimensions of personality. Each of these terms is relative, however, in that the term is used to describe behaviour exceeding a certain amount defined as 'normal' by the *observer*, in this case, Ruth Benedict from a 'Western' culture. If the Dobu were describing themselves, they would not necessarily use the word aggressive. Thus, the observer's own cultural norms determine the terms he will use to describe a member of another culture. Although a 'normal' amount of a trait depends upon the culture being considered, it has a fairly-well established value *within* the culture. Thus, most people in Great Britain would agree upon whether an act were aggressive or not, and also, upon the extent of the aggression. Within a culture it is possible to define a set of dimensions (traits) and to think of each individual as being at a certain point on each dimension – i.e. one can try to measure just how aggressive a person is compared with the other members of his social group. Trait theorists, of which R. B. Cattell (1965) is a well-known example, have attempted to isolate such dimensions by using special statistical procedures. Each person is assessed for each trait and the unique pattern of trait values is then said to constitute his personality.

2 VARIABLES UNDERLYING PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

How does personality develop? What conditions are necessary and what determines the kind of person the child will become? There seem to be two main groups of determinants, *genetic-physiological* and *socio-cultural*.

2.1 Genetic Determinants

The relative importance of these two groups of determinants has been the subject of controversy for many years and it is referred to as the 'Nature-Nurture Controversy'. During personality development there is an interaction between the individual's genetic endowment (nature) and environmental influences (nurture). Let us take an example from the process of physical development which will help you to understand this point. What determines your ultimate height? In general, your genes provide the limits of your height, and environmental influences (such as exercise, and diet) will determine how near to the limits you will grow and how quickly you will arrive at your final height. You can read a detailed account of this fascinating interaction between heredity and environment in the offprint by Tanner (*Scientific American*, No. 1091, 1968). However, no matter how nutritious or poor your diet, and no matter how much or little exercise you took, your height could not have been taken beyond certain limits in either direction. These are the limits set by your genetic endowment, and it is within these limits that environmental influences must work.

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[1] *Trait* is a descriptive term referring to one aspect of a personality, e.g. aggression, dependency.

From conception, each one of us has a unique set of genes, one half of which comes from the mother and the other half from the father. In this way, certain characteristics are passed on from one generation to the next. It is easy to see that a child tends to resemble one or other of his parents physically – he may have the same eye-colour as his father, or the same shaped nose as his mother – but one cannot readily perceive in the newborn, say, potential aggressive behaviour, or potential anxiety. This genetic component underlying personality development is called 'temperament': it is the innate disposition to acquire certain kinds of behaviour patterns, or to react in a certain way, for example the tendency towards emotionality.

We can illustrate, for example, that emotionality is genetically determined by reference to selective breeding experiments on rats. In one experiment two different kinds of rat, emotional and non-emotional, were bred from an original common stock. The index of emotionality was the tendency to defecate and urinate when placed in a stress situation.[1] By selecting the most and least emotional animals from each succeeding generation and breeding from the extreme cases, it was possible to produce two entirely different strains – one highly 'nervous' and the other more 'phlegmatic'. Post-mortem examination showed that parts of the endocrine system of the more 'emotional' animals were much enlarged compared with the same structures in the less 'emotional' animals. This fits in neatly with what is known about the physiological basis of emotional behaviour; anxiety is mediated by adrenalin, a hormone produced by the adrenal medulla.[2]

In the case of human beings, of course, it is not possible to conduct selective breeding experiments followed by autopsy. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence to suggest a genetic component in the development of emotional behaviour. The study of newborn babies, for instance, shows marked behavioural differences at birth. Between the years 1920 and 1950 psychologists were much in favour of the 'nurture' side of the equation and tended to assume that all healthy infants were more or less the same in temperament and in ability at birth and that all individual differences present by the age of five years were due entirely to different environmental influences and experiences. Since 1950, there has been a swing away from the environmentalist position, and careful observation of *neonates*[1] has shown that they differ along several dimensions. It is too early to draw conclusions from this research, but it seems that these innate differences may be extremely important in shaping the developmental processes.

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[1] This is called an *operational* definition of emotionality, since we are told what operations are to be performed in order to decide how 'emotional' a given rat is – in other words, we choose to *define* 'emotionality' by reference to readily observable and measurable aspects of the situation.

[2] Refer to Chapter 2 of Hilgard and Atkinson for a fuller account of the Autonomic Nervous System and Chapter 7 on Emotion.

Psychologists are currently studying such differences in the newborn, of which the following five characteristics are examples. You can read more about this kind of research in the offprint by Thomas, Chess and Birch (*Scientific American*, No. 529, August, 1970).

(i) VIGOUR

There is tremendous variation in the intensity of movement of newborn infants. Some move their limbs with great force,'and vocalise loudly whereas others are more placid. As yet there is too little evidence to make any conclusions about the relevance of vigour to personality development, but there is a suggestion that the more vigorous infants tend to be more lively throughout the first ten years of life than the more placid babies.

(ii) IRRITABILITY

Some babies tend to cry more easily than others, and there is also variation in the pattern of crying. Thus some seem to cry with ever-increasing force until they reach a crescendo while others seem to have a built-in mechanism which prevents this spiralling process. The child's irritability may well have far-reaching effects upon the mother – the same mother may well respond quite differently to a placid infant and to an irritable baby. If the child is irritable and she cannot quieten him, it may lead to a change of attitude towards the baby and also towards herself: she may begin to believe that she is failing as a mother and this,as well as concomitant guilt feelings may well affect her relationship with her baby. (This is a good example of interaction between genetic and environmental factors.) We shall see later that parental attitudes are important factors in the development of personality.

(iii) HABITUATION

By the age of three months, most children show *habituation*, i.e. they show signs of 'losing interest' when looking at things or playing with objects. There are marked individual differences, however, in the *rate* at which infants 'become bored' with things. Psychologists have attempted to measure the amount of time spent looking at a new stimulus, and they have shown that vigorous children show faster rates of habituation than placid infants, and that larger babies have slower rates of habituation than smaller, thin babies. The rate for each child is relatively stable during the first twelve months of life and it may well be shown, by further research, to be an important predictor of future behaviour and character. It could be that slow habituation may lead to an intense, reflective personality, whereas faster habituation may lead to the child becoming restless and fidgety, unable to spend much time at any one task. There is evidence already to show that the rate of habituation is, later on, similar to the 'rate of play', so that if a very young baby shows rapid habituation to a new visual display, he will probably spend less time playing with any one toy when older. The rate of habituation is also related to the speed of making decisions and activity during school years.

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[1] *Neonate* – Newly born child – used to describe infant from birth until end of first month of life.

(iv) THRESHOLD OF ATTENTION CHANGE
This means the 'sensitivity' of the child to changes in his environment. Some babies seem to perceive minimal changes and others respond only to large alterations in their surroundings, so that one child may be very sensitive to changes and may appear to notice even a faint shadow passing over his pram and attend to it whereas other babies would notice only more obvious happenings.

(v) SOCIAL RESPONSIVITY
This is the degree to which infants attract attention from adults. It is not clear whether this is learned behaviour, or an innate tentendency, but by the age of four months there seem to be great differences between children. Some babies smile, vocalise and respond to an adult's attention by laughing; whereas other babies are quieter, smile less, and tend to be upset when picked up by an adult. Interaction with adults enhances the trend; responsive babies become more so and unresponsive babies become even quieter. Again, it is too early to conclude what association this may have to later personality, but it is possible that socially responsive babies tend to become outgoing, extraverted adults.

Further research may help us to understand the significance of these early differences to later personality structure and their relevance to the acquisition of specific motives and behaviour patterns. It will be interesting to see how well they predict later development so that one might attempt in future to maximise the chances of health in adult years and minimise 'abnormal' development.

These *innate* differences in the child may interact with the *socio-cultural* determinants of personality in two ways, either directly, via the effects of his behaviour upon himself (i.e. behaviour rewarded or not), or indirectly (i.e. the effects of his behaviour upon the attitudes of others in his environment towards him). Thus an extremely vigorous child may bump into more obstacles as he rushes around and may, as a result, learn to deal with feelings of frustration earlier than a less active child. In addition his mother will have certain attitudes towards his boisterous behaviour; she may be proud of her healthy, active son and reward him, behaving towards him in such a manner that he comes to see himself as a valued person. She may on the other hand be irritated by his apparent clumsiness and regard him as a nuisance which would lead to quite a different effect upon the child's idea of himself.

2.2 The Influence of Maturation

Maturation is the process of growth and development of structures and systems which subserve behaviour. It is presumed to be genetically controlled and, given adequate environmental conditions, it follows a systematic pattern. Thus nearly all children learn to walk sometime between the age of seven and fourteen months. It is doubtful whether any child in the history of mankind has ever walked *without support* by four months. The 'equipment' – the nervous system as well as the appropriate muscles have not matured to the stage where walking without support is possible. Furthermore, when the process of maturation has proceeded far enough, learning takes place fairly rapidly with or without encouragement from the parents. Traditionally, the Hopi Indians keep their babies strapped to a rigid board for the first three months of their lives. Due to the influence of the white man some babies in this same tribe are not restricted in this manner, and are cradled according to our customs. On average there is no difference in the ages at which the infants learn to walk between those bound in the traditional manner and those left unrestricted from birth. Thus early freedom of the limbs has no effect upon the time at which the limbs become fully functional.

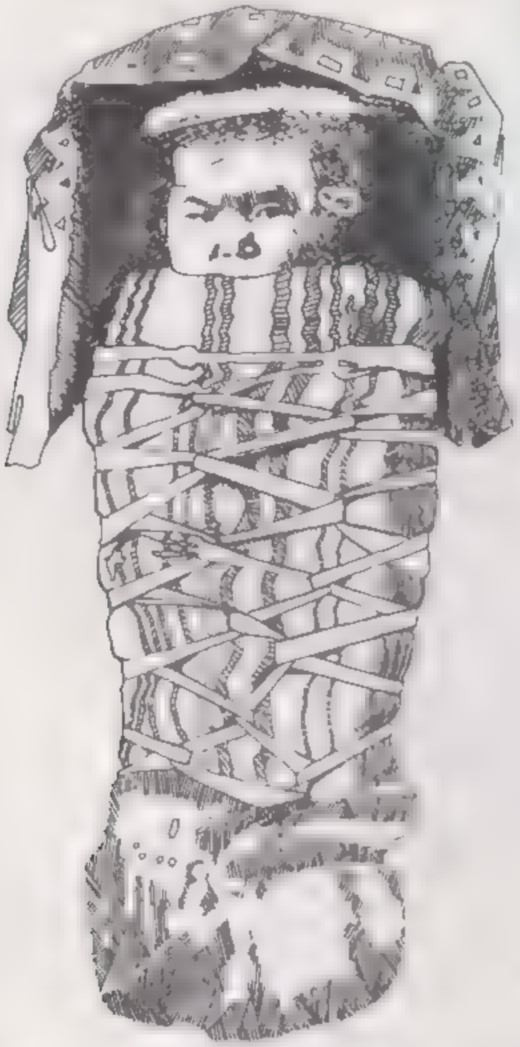

Figure 7.1 Hopi Indian babies bundled in this way show no handicap in motor development – they walk at the same time as babies who are not restricted.

Animal experiments have shown that in certain species of birds e.g. ducks, geese and hens, certain behaviour patterns which have important consequences for the individual and its species occur only at fairly well defined stages in the maturation process. For example, it was found that ducklings, soon after hatching, would tend to follow and keep near to the first moving object in the environment; usually this is an adult member of its species, but you will remember from Unit 1, p. 15, that Konrad Lorenz became the object of attachment for some newly-hatched grey-lag geese. In adult years, the birds address their courtship behaviour towards the object of attachment. It has been shown that in ducklings this following behaviour

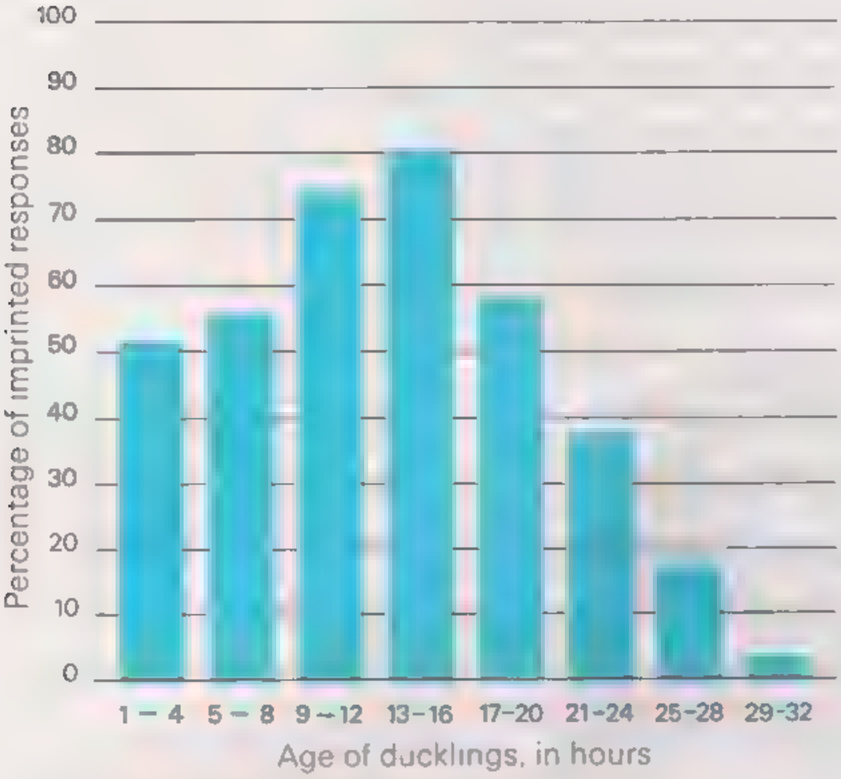

Figure 7.2 The optimum age for imprinting of ducklings (from Hess, 1959).

and consequent attachment will occur optimally between 13–16 hours after hatching. Before and after this time the following response will be less likely to occur and after 28 hours attachment becomes improbable. Other research suggests that the 'following response' will only take place before the development of the fear response, which leads to 'freezing' or avoidance of unfamiliar objects (i.e. after the maturation of the underlying processes and structures which subserve the so-called fear response, attachment becomes unlikely). This period of time during the maturation process when attachment is found to occur is called the 'critical period' for attachment. A critical period is the time when the effect of a particular experience is maximal, in this case the moving object eliciting the following response. Critical periods for attachment have been shown in other flock animals which are capable of moving soon after birth such as sheep, cows and deer: and similar processes are seen in cats and dogs and monkeys. Here, however, animals cannot 'follow' at birth and other behavioural responses are probably important, such as rooting, sucking and clinging. In these species, the critical period is less well defined and is longer than in birds, but early experience is more effective for attachment than later experience. As we shall see in the television programme, Harlow (1962) showed that for monkeys the strength of attachment formed during the first few months is greater than that of later attachment.

Some theorists, e.g. Bowlby (1965), as we shall see later, believe that there are analogous systems in humans, so that the first three years of life are critical for the establishment of trusting relationships. It is thought that failure of attachment to a mother or caretaker at this stage leads to the development of a withdrawn, detached or aggressive personality. We shall discuss this later in the Unit.

2.3 The Effects of Environment

Let us now turn to the 'nurture' side of the 'nature-nurture' interaction. The external environment can exert influences on the child even before it is born. The foetus derives oxygen and nutrients from the mother's blood and is, therefore, in close biochemical contact with her – certain components in the blood permeate through to the foetal blood system, such as adrenalin. Thus, the environmental experiences of the mother can indirectly affect the foetus. Psychologists have studied, therefore, the effects of maternal distress upon the foetus and neonates. Compared with new-born babies whose mothers were not under stress during pregnancy, neonates of stressed mothers were found to cry and fret more and to be more restless and active. This does not entirely rule out a genetic difference, however, as one could argue that distressed mothers may well be genetically disposed towards greater emotionality and that this has been transmitted, via their genes, to their offspring. Indeed, this kind of research is bedevilled by such problems.

In utero, the foetus is surrounded by a special kind of environment – the amniotic fluid of the foetal sac, which is a relatively constant kind of environment. The external environment after birth is far more variable and the fact that there is so much variation – even within the same family, makes research into the relative contributions of heredity and environmental influences to the adult personality extremely difficult. To examine adequately the relative effects of heredity and environment (both pre-natal and post-natal) one would need to hold one set of factors constant whilst manipulating the other: research on identical twins is an example of maintaining heredity constant but research on human beings in which the environment remains constant is almost impossible, not only for ethical reasons, but also because, at any one time, the same environment is interpreted differently by different people depending upon many different internal factors. However, studies on identical twins suggest that,as for physical development, behavioural limits appear to be set by heredity, and environment determines how near to these limits development will proceed.

3 THE SOCIAL ATTACHMENT BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD

We have already mentioned that, under normal environmental conditions, certain birds and mammals become attached to adult members of their species very soon after birth and that this has important implications for behaviour in adult life.

There seems to be a similar kind of process in humans also – young babies become attached to a caretaker figure in their environment, and this seems to be important to their development.

3.1 How does Attachment Take Place?

How does attachment take place? How does the child become attached to its mother or mother-substitute? The traditional explanation was based upon the idea that any new stimulus presented with a reward, such as food, would itself acquire reward value. This implies that the mother's value for the child results from reducing pain and providing pleasure. However, recent work on primates in America has shown that this process is more complex and it cannot be explained by the traditional theory. As we shall see in the television programme for this Unit and as you can read in the offprint sent with Unit 1 (*Scientific American*, No. 429, 1959), Harlow in the United States of America has studied attachment behaviour in rhesus monkeys. To remind you briefly of the experiment – infant monkeys reared from birth with two substitute mothers (one made of wire, the other covered with terry towelling) were found to become attached to the 'mother' which provided a surface to which it could cling irrespective of which one provided food.

If the traditional learning theory explanations of attachment were correct, then the object of attachment for the baby monkey should be the mother which provides food and not always the terry-towelling mother. Harlow clearly demonstrated that this was not the case.

It was concluded that clinging was an important factor in the attachment process of rhesus monkeys – the clinging response appears to be analogous to the 'following response' in some birds and mammals. Thus, in the attachment process of certain animals there is a special kind of interaction between innate behaviour patterns and environmental stimuli. At birth the animal is capable of certain responses and it tends to emit these responses to the first appropriate stimulus in its environment. These stimuli can be very specific, or more general, depending upon the species. In the natural state, the first likely stimulus will probably be the 'mother' animal and this means that it is usually the mother who becomes the object of attachment. As we saw in Unit 1 Television, certain birds follow the first moving object after hatching (geese, chickens, ducks), other birds which hatch in arboreal nests gape when the mother appears, baby monkeys cling to their mother – what are the analogous behaviour patterns in the human child? Likely behaviour patterns include scanning, babbling, sucking, holding, and so on. It is usually the mother who elicits these responses and, therefore, she is likely to become the object of attachment.

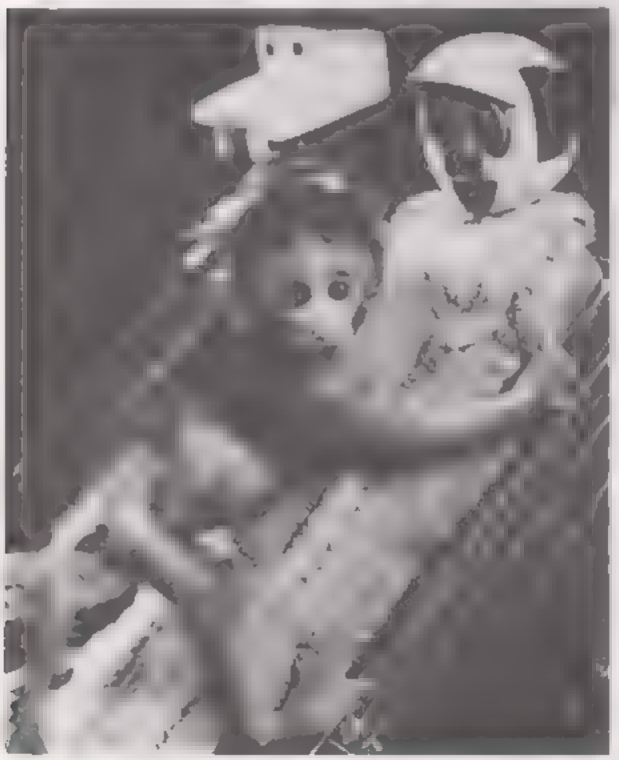

Figure 7.3a The infant shows a marked preference for the cloth mother, and spends a great deal of the time clinging to her.

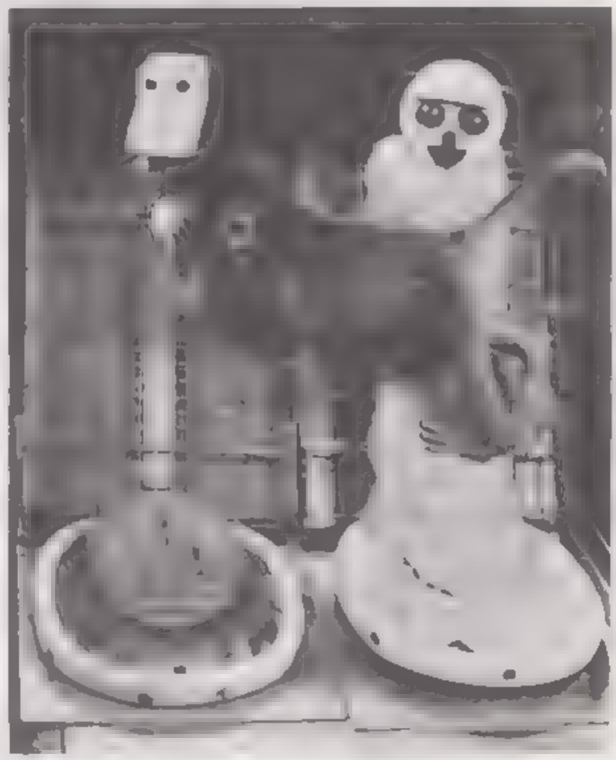

Figure 7.3b The infant attends to the wire mother only when he is hungry!

Attachment can be defined operationally as the degree to which the infant tends to interact with the adult caretaker. As a consequence of attachment, the child learns the characteristics of a particular person extremely well, and gradually learns to distinguish her from other people around him. When she leaves him he shows signs of distress. It has been shown in many studies that the 'mother figure' can allay fear and anxiety in its offspring, and a low level of anxiety becomes associated with the presence of the mother. If she is absent the infant is more likely to experience strong anxiety. The age when separation anxiety appears in children depends upon the frequency of contact between the mother and child; if the mother spends more time with the infant, her departure is more readily a 'discrepant' part of the match between environment and the child's knowledge of what the 'usual environment' should be like. Cross-cultural studies show that in cultures where children are carried by their mothers all day, separation anxiety appears sooner than in cultures where the infant spends long periods of the day without the mother. For example, in Uganda, where children are carried all day long by their mothers, it appears at about six months of age, and in European and American cultures where babies are left alone quite frequently, it appears four months later. In general, the more frequently the child and mother interact, the earlier and more intense will be the separation anxiety.

3.2 The Consequences of Attachment

What are the consequences of attachment? Perhaps this can be illustrated by discussing what happens when a new-born infant does *not* become attached to a mother figure. How does the failure of the attachment process affect later personality development? Obviously, for ethical reasons, one cannot interfere experimentally with the normal attachment process in human beings simply in order to see the effects upon later development; thus strict experimental investigation of this question is not possible. However, there are naturally occurring situations in which the normal mother-child relationship is altered in some way and study of these may well help us to understand the significance of attachment. Of course, there have been reports of children who have been found living in the wild, reared by animals, or who have been shut away for the early part of their lives (see for instance, the article on the Wolf Boy in the *Reader*, pages 138–153). But in the main, this kind of information is anecdotal or there is some question as to whether the child would have developed 'normally' even if given adequate environmental conditions and it does not really help us a great deal in understanding the process of attachment in human beings. However, there are three kinds of situations which psychologists have studied, which provide varying amounts of 'maternal deprivation'.

(i) Children who have been reared from birth in institutions where they receive insufficient care from *one* person.

(ii) Children reared at home where insufficient care is provided by the mother or mother-substitute and there is no one else in his environment to provide this.

(iii) Children experiencing periods of separation from their mothers or mother-substitutes after they have formed an attachment to them.

Children reared from birth in institutions are potentially the least likely group to form a deep attachment to a single mother-figure.

One study (Provence and Lipton, 1962) reported that younger children in an institution (0–8 months of age) were kept in comfortable single cots, in cubicles under extremely hygienic conditions, but with little contact with adults except minimally at feeding and nappy-changing times as the staff were busy with several children to attend to. In addition each child was looked after by several adults so that attachment to *one* person was unlikely. Comparison with family-reared infants revealed little difference in the development of the institutionalised children until the age of four months, but after this age, differences became apparent. They showed little cooing, babbling or crying, they did not adjust their postures when picked up and 'felt stiff' to the adult nursing them and did not seem as cuddly as most babies do. By the end of the first year, they were less active than family reared children, showed less interest in their environment and did not want to play with toys. Their facial expressions tended to be bland and they were not frightened by strangers, nor by being left alone. Their crying never seemed to be angry or demanding just miserable, and they did not turn to adults in distress. Their range and intensity of feeling seemed impoverished and language was delayed. If an adult attempted to play with such a child, he became slightly more responsive, but quickly returned to the depressed, apathetic state when the adult withdrew. Thus, the lack of attachment in these children resulted in poor social responsiveness, little emotional involvement with others and low motivation.

Of course, a child need not actually be physically separated from his home to be 'deprived': early rejection by one or both parents can cause just as much 'psychological isolation'. Studies of children who have been rejected by their mother or parents suggest that this often results in maladjusted behaviour and disturbed interpersonal relationships later in life. It has been reported that parental rejection is associated with unsocialised aggression in the child; that parental neglect is associated with delinquency and that a repressive family atmosphere is said to lead to the development of symptoms of neurosis in the child. This kind of research is complex as it is difficult to isolate the determining factors so that one should accept the results with caution.

The third set of studies involve research into the effects of repeated separations from the mother *after* attachment has taken place, i.e. after six to nine months of age. In general, these studies suggest that, if there is no adequate substitute figure, separation from the object of attachment leads to dramatic changes in the behaviour of the child some of which[1] may, or may not, be reversible depending upon the length of the separation and the age at which it occurs[2]. The child typically suffers what could be described as, a 'depressed' state, he becomes apathetic, unhappy, quiet, unresponsive, sad and apprehensive. He withdraws from his environment and makes little attempt to interact with adults. He loses weight, sleeps badly and his general development slows down. When mother reappears she is often rejected by the child initially, then this is frequently followed by increased demands on the mother, intense possessiveness, insistence on having his own way, acute jealousy and violent temper tantrums.

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[1] Certain kinds of impairment are thought to be less easily reversible than others and these include the capacity for strong and lasting attachments to other people.

[2] It is not clear in most studies whether the effects of 'maternal deprivation' are due to lack of a mother figure *per se*, or to other conditions inherent in the situation such as inadequate environmental stimulation. The deprivation situation can be subdivided into three components, sensory, social and emotional deprivation. Further research will hopefully clarify this point.

Risk of permanent damage to the personality is said to be greatest before the age of three years and reported to decrease slightly by the age of five years when language makes it possible for children to understand that mother will return. Older children seem to adjust to separation better, but not if it is sudden and there has been no warning of the departure of the mother. Separations of greater than three months are reported to be more damaging and the behavioural changes become less reversible. Studies of children evacuated from London during World War II showed that these children were homesick and lacked concentration in school. The incidence of bed-wetting, delinquency and maladjusted behaviour increased. In many cases, these effects disappeared on returning home, but in others these problems persisted for many years.

By the age of eight years, the effects of separation are found to depend to a great extent upon the family relationships; if the child feels unwanted or unloved, separation might be interpreted as complete rejection and lead to hostility towards his parents which will affect his future relationship with them. However, if the child feels secure and is prepared adequately, separation is unlikely to result in permanent harm.

During the years 1930–43 many papers were written upon the long-term effects of maternal deprivation, commenting upon the frequency with which separation was followed by development of a 'disturbed personality' and disturbed behaviour. Typical features were: little capacity to make friends and to care for people, ability to make *only* superficial relationships, lack of *affect* in emotionally-provoking situations, lack of concern, inaccessability, evasiveness, deceitfulness, lack of concentration and a tendency to steal. This has been called an 'affectionless character'.

Dr. Bowlby, in this country, studied children referred to a Child Guidance Clinic and compared a group of children reported as having stolen at some time with a group of emotionally disturbed children who had not been reported to be 'thieves'. The group of 'thieves' were different from the other group in two ways – it contained significantly more 'affectionless characters' and approximately half of the group had experienced long periods of separation from their mother-figures during the first five years of life, whereas, only two of the forty-four children in the other group had experienced separation. He concluded that: 'there is a very strong case indeed for believing that prolonged separation of a child from his mother (or mother substitute) during the first five years of life stands foremost among the causes of delinquent character development' (Bowlby (1946). However since then there has been much controversy over this point and subsequent research findings are conflicting. This is not surprising since the situation is complex and there are many methodological problems in studying it, e.g. it is difficult to establish a suitable control group, as there are likely to be many differences between the groups – other than the experience of separation. Also, this kind of retrospective study deals with a selected sample of disturbed children and does not, therefore, include those children who also experienced early separation but who did not become delinquent subsequently. One of the main sources of variation has been the definition of 'maternal deprivation', so that different

Figure 7.4 Longitudinal studies suggest that parental neglect is often followed by delinquency in later life

research workers have studied different situations. Retrospective case studies of emotionally disturbed children and adults frequently show a significant association between personality disturbance and early deprivation, but follow up studies (which deal with an unselected sample and follow their development) suggest that delinquent behaviour is not *necessarily* a result of early separation. Follow up studies usually link delinquency with parental neglect rather than separation *per se*.

However, despite controversy about various aspects of this work[1] evidence suggests that early disturbance of the mother-child relationship can have serious consequences for future personality development. To develop into a feeling, thoughtful, loving human being capable of empathy, it seems that one needs a secure, trusting and warm relationship with an adult caretaker in early life.

4 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINANTS OF PERSONALITY

Let us now look at some other socio-cultural influences which psychologists have considered to be important determinants of personality.

4.1 Feeding Practices

For many years it was thought that whether a child experienced breast or bottle feeding had important implications for future development. Recent research (quoted above, p. 43) has shown that feeding plays only a very small part in the complex process of establishing a bond between mother and child. Also, despite the fact that the proportion of mothers from particular social, ethnic or personality groups who choose to breast feed their babies has changed during the past twenty years, the main psychological differences between their offspring remain constant. This implies that the feeding *method*, *per se* is not important, but that the *maternal attitude* is a more important factor.

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[1] See the chapters by Mary Ainsworth in *Child Care and the Growth of Love* John Bowlby (Penguin, 1965). Abridged and edited by Margery Fry.

4.2 Social Class

We shall discuss this concept in further detail in Unit 18, but let us now simply accept the fact that most societies do have some form of social stratification and that the strata have different life styles, attitudes and behaviour which are reflected in different child-rearing practices. Psychologists both here and in the U.S.A. have studied the differences between child-rearing practices of 'middle' and 'lower' class families and there seem to be well marked differences which appear to have some bearing upon the kind of personality traits shown in adult life.

Research has suggested that, in general, children from middle-class homes tend to be better adjusted, more responsible, self-controlled, popular and possess more of the qualities of leadership than those from working-class homes. Middle-class parents tend to place emphasis upon the control of violence and aggression, whereas lower-class parents often encourage or, at least, allow violence as a way of dealing with disagreements and also of gaining respect. The middle-class parents are usually concerned about achievement and the child often becomes anxious to succeed and gain parental approval. Thus he learns to postpone immediate gratification for future glories so that, for example, he may refuse to go to a party in order to study,thereby improving his chances of gaining a place at University. Lower-class children in general are reported to have short-term goals,as they are not encouraged to delay immediate gratification. Thus, it is said that as adults, the middle class tends to be more far-sighted and plans for the future whereas the lower class tends to live for the present.

Recent research has indicated that middle-class parents place more reliance upon 'psychological' methods of discipline which depend upon the emotional ties between the child and adult. They tend to express disappointment over their children's misbehaviour, threaten loss of love, reason with the child and appeal to his conscience, explaining why the behaviour is wrong. Working-class parents, on the other hand, are likely to use physical punishment and ridicule to discipline their children. Psychological techniques tend to be more effective as socialising methods as they seem to promote the internalisation of adult standards, co-operation and obedience. However, they also seem to produce more dependent, anxious and timid adults who are more sensitive to rejection and tend to lack initiative.

Comparison of child-rearing practices of different parts of the socio-economic scale suggests that upper middle-class homes show little differentiation in their treatment of male and female children, but that differences become more apparent as one passes down the scale and,at the level of the lower middle class, boys receive more physical punishment and girls receive more warmth and affection, and are more likely to be socialised by 'love-orientated' techniques.

At this socio-economic level, boys excel girls on traits such as leadership, level of aspiration and competitiveness. Further up the socio-economic scale, the differences found between girls and boys of lower middle-class families reverse themselves. This suggests that many of the differences between males and females are due to cultural influences rather than to purely genetic or maturational factors.

4.3 Birth Order

It is widely believed that 'only children' tend to have personality characteristics not found in children with brothers and sisters. However, research in this area does not support this and, in general, they do not seem to differ in any consistent way from children from larger families. There has also been much research upon the effects of the ordinal position in the family, i.e. whether you are the first born, or second, third, fourth etc: but there is little clear evidence to support the notion that order of birth *per se* is related specifically to the adult personality or to behaviour in certain stressful situations (Wrightsman, 1968).

4.4 Family Structure and Parental Attitudes

In the home, parental attitudes, and socialising techniques are important factors in the development of personality. On the whole, mothers tend to use indirect, 'love-orientated' techniques of discipline and fathers use physical punishment – especially towards boys. Each parent tends to be more demanding and strict with children of the same sex and more persuasive and indulgent with children of the opposite sex. However, fathers are *more likely* to show this pattern than mothers, and therefore, it is mainly the father's attitudes and behaviour which account for the different environmental pressures on the two sexes. You will remember that this depends also upon the socio-economic status of the family and will be most marked at the lower middle class levels where the maternal and paternal rôles are more markedly different.

Results of recent research (Bronfenbrenner, 1961) suggest that responsibility and leadership are encouraged when discipline is the responsibility of the parent of the same sex, boys from families where father is the main disciplinarian are more responsible and similarly girls from matriarchal homes. Matriarchal homes also tend to promote strong motives to compete and to achieve in both sexes and this is especially marked where an early period of intense maternal involvement with the child is followed by pressures for independence and accomplishment. Children from homes where parents emphasise achievement are found to be aggressive, organising and far-sighted, but also, tense, cruel and dominating.

Studies of families where the father is absent show that he has a special importance in the socialisation of boys. His absence seems to affect the son both directly, in that the child has no masculine model (see Unit 6, p. 19) and also indirectly, via the greater tendency of the mother towards being over-protective towards him. Sons from this kind of home are frequently found to be more submissive and dependent than sons from homes where both parents are present.

Research also suggests that criminality is related to certain aspects of family structure and parental behaviour. Longitudinal studies[1] in the United States of America (McCord and McCord, 1958) suggest that children of fathers convicted of crime have roughly a 50 per cent chance of becoming criminal also. It seems that this is particularly likely to happen if either the father or the mother also has a rejecting attitude towards the child. A warm relationship with the mother and consistent discipline seemed to counteract the effects of having a criminal father. Boys with deviant *mothers* as well as criminal fathers show a high rate of criminality – approximately two-thirds of such boys in the study had been convicted of crime. This research is complicated as it is difficult to determine the effects of each factor and their interaction, but the general picture seems to be that, usually, children become criminal in a family where one of the parents has been convicted, only when other environmental conditions such as maternal deviance, parental rejection or inconsistent discipline have tended to produce an unstable, aggressive personality. Under these circumstances, the child tends to channel his aggressive tendencies into criminal activities. This research suggests that, in the case of crime, sons do not necessarily imitate their fathers because of an affectional bond between them as one would have predicted from the kind of experiments on imitation discussed in Unit 6. Why this is so, is not yet clear.

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[1] A longitudinal study involves following a group of subjects over a long period of time making repeated observations on each subject.

4.5 Toilet Training

Psychologists have studied the effects of the age at which this begins and also the severity of the training techniques used by the mother upon the subsequent personality of the child. The research is poor and the results are open to many interpretations: toilet training cannot really be studied in isolation because the mother who is strict about this is also likely to be strict in other areas such as control of aggression and noise, manners, school performance and so on. Thus the causal factor may be the general *attitude* of the mother towards her child rather than one aspect of his socialisation.

5 THEORIES OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

The task of any theory of personality development is to trace the connections between the personality of the child and the adult, and to explain how the adult organisation of 'psychic' processes and behaviour evolved from that of the child. One must distinguish such theories from those of personality *structure* which attempt to describe the stable parts of the adult personality and from those of 'personality *dynamics*' which attempt to explain the adjustment processes by which individuals adapt to internal and external events and stresses.

5.1 Psychoanalytic Theories

Sigmund Freud is perhaps the most widely known personality theorist. His ideas about personality development are derived from his broader theories of psychosexual development. The background of his theory is the idea that the child is born in a state of 'original sin' with irrational desires and appetites which his development is directed towards overcoming. Freud's theory implies that man begins life without morality, with neither the capacity to tolerate frustration nor to delay gratification of his biological urges. He considers the sexual and aggressive drives to be critical determinants in the development of personality.

Freud suggests that each stage of development was characterised by specific sensitivity of one part of the body. The first stage he called the ORAL stage and the focus of pleasure was said to be the mouth and related areas, thus pleasure was experienced through sucking, biting, swallowing etc. He saw this stage as being essential for the establishment of a trusting relationship with the mother which formed the basis for later warm and trusting relationships with others. The second phase, during the second year of life he called the ANAL stage where pleasure was experienced through control of the anal sphincter. He believed that frustration at this stage would lead to specific kinds of adult personality, either to a compulsive, obstinate, mean character (the psychological equivalent of physically *retaining* faeces!) or to a disorderly, destructive personality (the equivalent of expelling faeces). Favourable experience at this stage was said to result in a creative, productive personality.

Following this, the third phase, the PHALLIC stage began somewhere in the 3rd or 4th year when the focus of pleasure was said to be the genitals and at this time, the child was thought to develop a sexual interest in the parent of the opposite sex and experience feelings of rivalry with the same sexed parent and consequently, guilt (the Oedipus situation). As this situation resolved the child was said to begin to identify with his parents (see Unit 6) and conscience began to emerge as the result of the internalisation of parental attitudes and values. During this stage, he began to adopt the rôles appropriate to his sex and age. Thereafter, between the ages of 6 and 12 years, followed the 'latency period', when, Freud believed, 'sexual' interests became dormant and the main source of pleasure was the outside world. The final stage, the GENITAL stage, began at puberty and sexual interest was again aroused, this time in the adult genital form.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory stresses also the importance of early experiences of the child for its future development. Originally, the oedipal situation was said to be crucial in determining future personality and mental health, but later theorists e.g. Bowlby, Klein, Erikson and Anna Freud have stressed even earlier relationships with the mother. These theorists all believe that adequate maternal love is essential to the child, but they stress that this depends not only upon the mother but also upon the child, because a mother who is 'adequate' for one baby may not be able to meet the idiosyncratic needs of another infant.

Freud's theories were based upon information gleaned from adult patients in a clinical setting, looking back upon their childhood. This cannot really provide accurate, objective information about the relevant parts of early childhood, however, as many of the so-called crucial experiences occur before language develops and are usually beyond the limits of accurate recall. Even later childhood experiences will tend to be remembered in a distorted form. Psychoanalytic theory is often criticised as being unscientific, in that it is said to describe everything and predict nothing and that its hypotheses are untestable by strict scientific methods. However, the theory has inspired much research into the early relationship between mother and child (e.g. see work based on Bowlby, earlier in the Unit, p. 47) and also into the structure of adult personality – for example, the study by Sears quoted in Hilgard and Atkinson (1970) on page 475. Sears found that, as Freud had suggested, stinginess, orderliness and obstinacy tend to go together so that people who are mean also tend to be neat and obstinate. Neo-Freudian[1] analysts such as Erik Erikson stress the environment and social influences upon the child more than Freud's original theory which concentrated mainly upon the 'instinctive' determinants of personality. Erikson sees the individual as attempting to make the best possible use of available environmental opportunities in order to meet his inner needs. He sees the personality as evolving from the combination of instinctive, parental, cultural and environmental forces so that the process of maturation is modified by the process of education in its broader sense. Again, the work leans heavily upon clinical material and is mainly descriptive in character.

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[1] Neo-Freudian theories are later theories derived from Freud's original theory.

5.2 Sheldon's Theory of Body Type

Let us turn to theories which tend to be more experimentally based.

The approach used by Sheldon and his associates was more systematic (see Hilgard and Atkinson (1970) Ch. 18, p. 466). His theory attempted to account for the sort of correlations that are produced in support of the Freudian theory along very different lines. In his two books *Varieties of Human Physique* (1940) and *Varieties of Temperament* (1942) the relationship between body types and personality variables were subjected to extensive analysis. In the event his investigations turned out to have their weaknesses in both methodology and logic, but the basic idea still has its appeal. Some physical characteristics we know are genetically coded. Temperament, too, has its genetic components. The stereotype of the skinny, withdrawn, schizoid personality might well, in principle, be the result of linked genetic influences. The methodological problem is to demonstrate

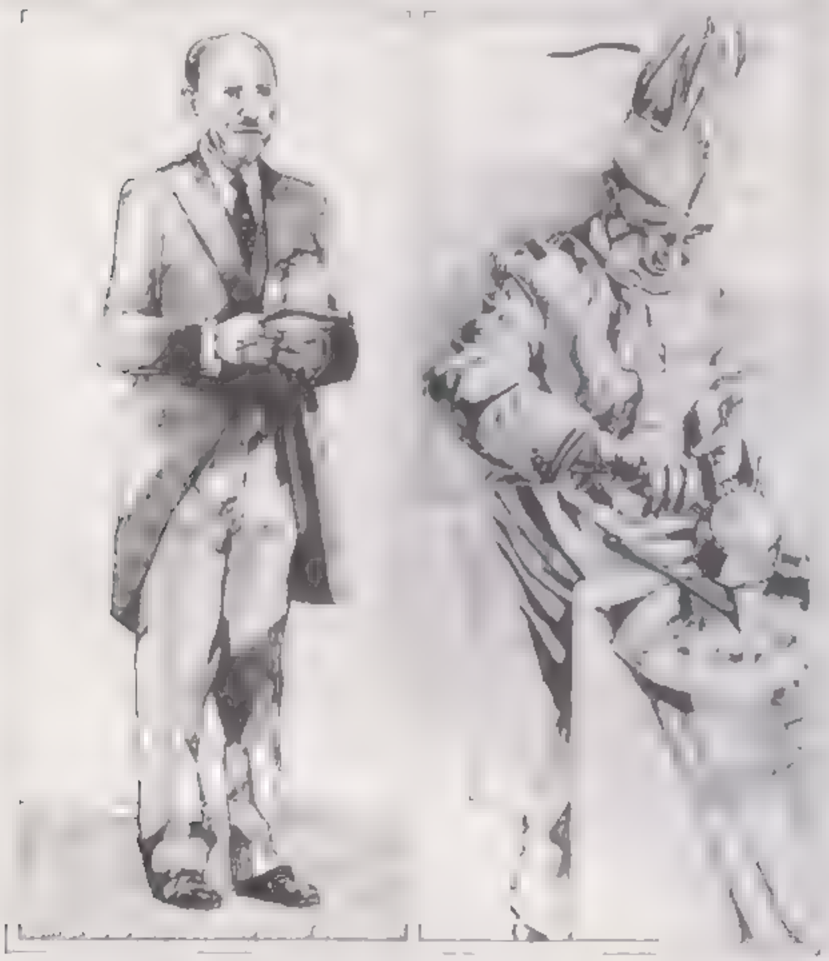

Figure 7.5 Two examples of Sheldon's Body Types; a fat, jolly man (an endomorph) and a thin, withdrawn man (an ectomorph).

that the particular physical and psychological characteristics are found together at a level beyond chance. Having done that, the logical problem remains of proving that the link is due to genetic influences. There are, in point of fact, several other arguments, at least as plausible, that would account for a correlation of the kind asserted. Maybe you can work some of the alternative possibilities out for yourself. How would you account for the social stereotypes of the jolly fat man, the quick-tempered red-head and the high-domed intellectual?

5.3 Eysenck's Theory of Personality Factors

Perhaps the most influential attempt at a scientific theory of personality in this country, has been the work of Eysenck in his *Scientific Study of Personality* (1952) and *The Structure of Human Personality* (1960).

His early work consisted mainly of the pure description of the adult personality in terms of traits. By using a statistical technique called Factor Analysis he found that certain traits tended to have well-defined relationships with other traits. To account for these relationships he described three 'factors': 1. Neuroticism, which roughly corresponds to 'emotionality'; 2. Psychoticism – the tendency towards an abnormal pathological mental state; 3. Extraversion, which roughly corresponds to 'sociability'. These three personality dimensions, he claimed, were statistically unrelated to one another so that they could be thought of as defining three-dimensional space as in Figure 7.6.

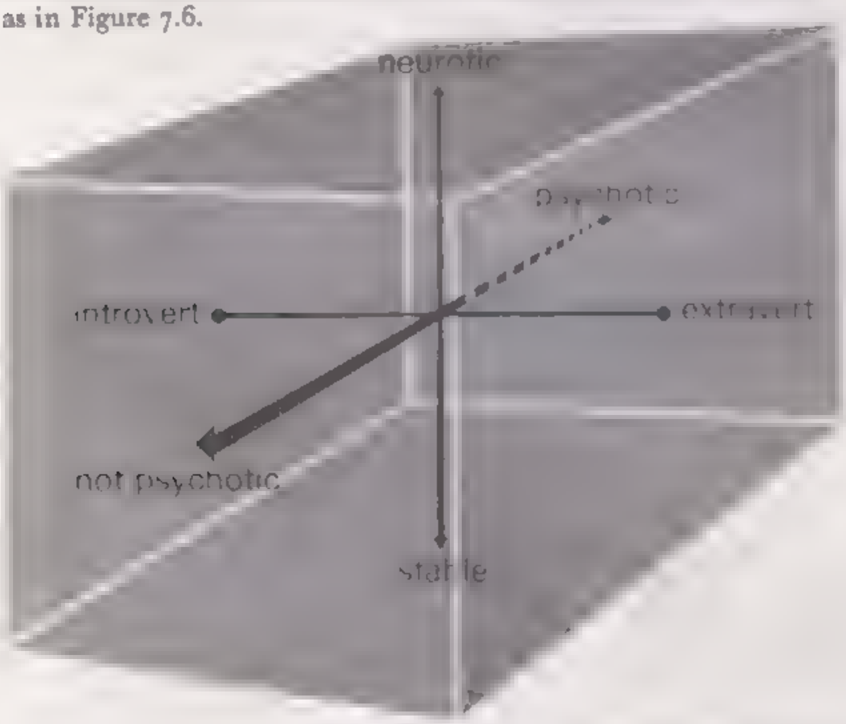

Figure 7.6 Eysenck's Three Personality Factors: Neuroticism, Psychoticism and Extraversion. (Two dimensional representation of three dimensional space.)

An individual can be measured on all three dimensions and will therefore occupy a position in 3-dimensional space determined by three values of the three Factors – as if occupying a position in a room.

With respect to personality development the question is, how does an individual come to occupy a given position in this 3-dimensional space? Eysenck suggests that each dimension has a constitutional base i.e. these are innate tendencies, which of course he admits can be modified by environmental experience.

Eysenck and other workers (who do not always agree in detail with Eysenck's theory) have provided evidence which supports the theory that there may be a constitutional difference between Introverts and Extraverts and it has been suggested that a specific area of the lower brain may be responsible. As yet the idea of a constitutional base for the other two dimensions has not been supported so well.

5·4 Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

Another theory of development has been formulated by a Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget. He was interested in establishing a logical link between Biology and Psychology and was mainly concerned with the maturation and development of underlying structures and organisational activities *within* the individual rather than with environmental stimulation which is the chief concern of the learning theory approach, as we shall see later (Sears, below). Personality development is seen as part of the general *cognitive* development of the child which depends primarily upon the evolution of the individual's capacity to organise his experiences and feelings.

His theory is based mainly upon information gathered from 'normal' children answering standard questions and solving standard problems at different chronological ages. Thus it is concerned mainly with the cognitive, conscious, conflict-free aspect of human behaviour. He sees the goal of human behaviour as the achievement of a balance between the individual and his environment whilst striving towards more complex organisation of cognitive processes. This adaptation of the individual is based upon two closely related processes, *assimilation* and *accommodation*. The former involves the subjective experience of the environment by which events are interpreted in terms of something already familiar to the person: the latter is a complementary process involving adaptation of existing knowledge and behaviour to the environmental circumstances.

Piaget describes development as passing through five distinct stages, each characterised by specific kinds of cognitive functioning, and each stage involving a more complex organisation than the previous one. Personality development is said to pass from the egocentric orientation of the infant, through the early stages of experimentation with physical aspects of the world, then to the social level where identification becomes an important socialising process, on to the ideational level where personality development depends upon the exchange of ideas through social communication. Piaget suggests that conscience evolves from early complete acceptance of adult authority, through the ability to empathise, to a feeling of equality and integrity and to a sense of ethics and justice. Affect is seen as a kind of 'mirror image' process to cognition – it activates 'desire' which is recognised and responded to by cognitive processes which take into account the environmental limits and opportunities.

5·5 Sear's Learning Theory Approach

In contrast to Piaget's theory which emphasises covert maturational processes let us now consider a theory which is concerned mainly with overt behaviour – the learning theory approach of Robert Sears (1957). This is basically a theory of motivational development, based on a reward and punishment theory of learning. The adult personality is seen as the product of the parent's child-rearing practices by which innate biological drives such as hunger and thirst become the basis for the formation of a sytem of secondary motivational drives. These secondary drives ultimately determine adult behaviour because they are potentially 'stronger forces' than the primary biological drives.

Sears sees development as 'a continuous orderly sequence of conditions which create actions, new motives for actions and eventual patterns of behaviour'. He suggests that 'stages' of development may not necessarily be biologically determined because adults tend to have different expectancies of the child at different ages and it may be that changes in *our own expectancies* lead us to believe in developmental stages in the child whether they exist in reality or not. However, his theory involves three developmental stages, the first is based upon innate needs and learning in the newborn; the second, a phase of 'secondary motivational systems' based upon learning situations provided within the family; and the final phase, one of 'secondary motivational systems' based upon learning in situations *other* than the family, e.g. school and neighbourhood. He sees the early mother-child attachment as stemming from the child's transition from trial and error learning to direct reward learning when, because the mother is the agent of reward she encourages dependence and becomes a valued object for the child. The young child's behaviour is controlled by the parents' use of direct reward and punishment; later, he controls his own behaviour according to the parents' rules (this is the stage of identification – see Unit 6). Identification itself becomes a motivation system in that the child experiences 'punishment' (i.e. guilt or anxiety) whenever his behaviour fails to conform to that of the internalised ideal model for behaviour. Thus, adult behaviour patterns are the product of immediate social experiences during life and individual differences are the product of different learning experiences.

Most of these theories of personality development effectively account for the evolution of the adult personality from that of the child, passing through an orderly sequence of stages in an orderly environment. However, each theory tends to concentrate on only one aspect of the complex process and by itself can only help us to understand some of the mechanisms involved in personality development. Thus Piaget emphasises cognitive understanding as the crucial factor in all human behaviour; Freud would suggest that affective processes are the most important determinants, while Sears implies that it is the behaviour *per se* which is the most important aspect of the whole thing. However, every child is capable of thinking, feeling *and* acting, and so, any effective theory of personality development must include an explanation of all three activities and their significance to the individual's development.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This unit has introduced you to the study of personality development. We have discussed some of the determinants of personality and briefly presented some of the theories put forward to account for personality development. As one is dealing with an immensely complex situation and also trying to explain essentially unseen processes, it is not surprising that there are a number of theories propounded which do not, in themselves, explain the whole process, nor predict individual behaviour patterns.

In the next unit we shall be dealing with one aspect of socialisation which has not yet been discussed in detail, namely attitudes – their formation, change and relation to overt behaviour.

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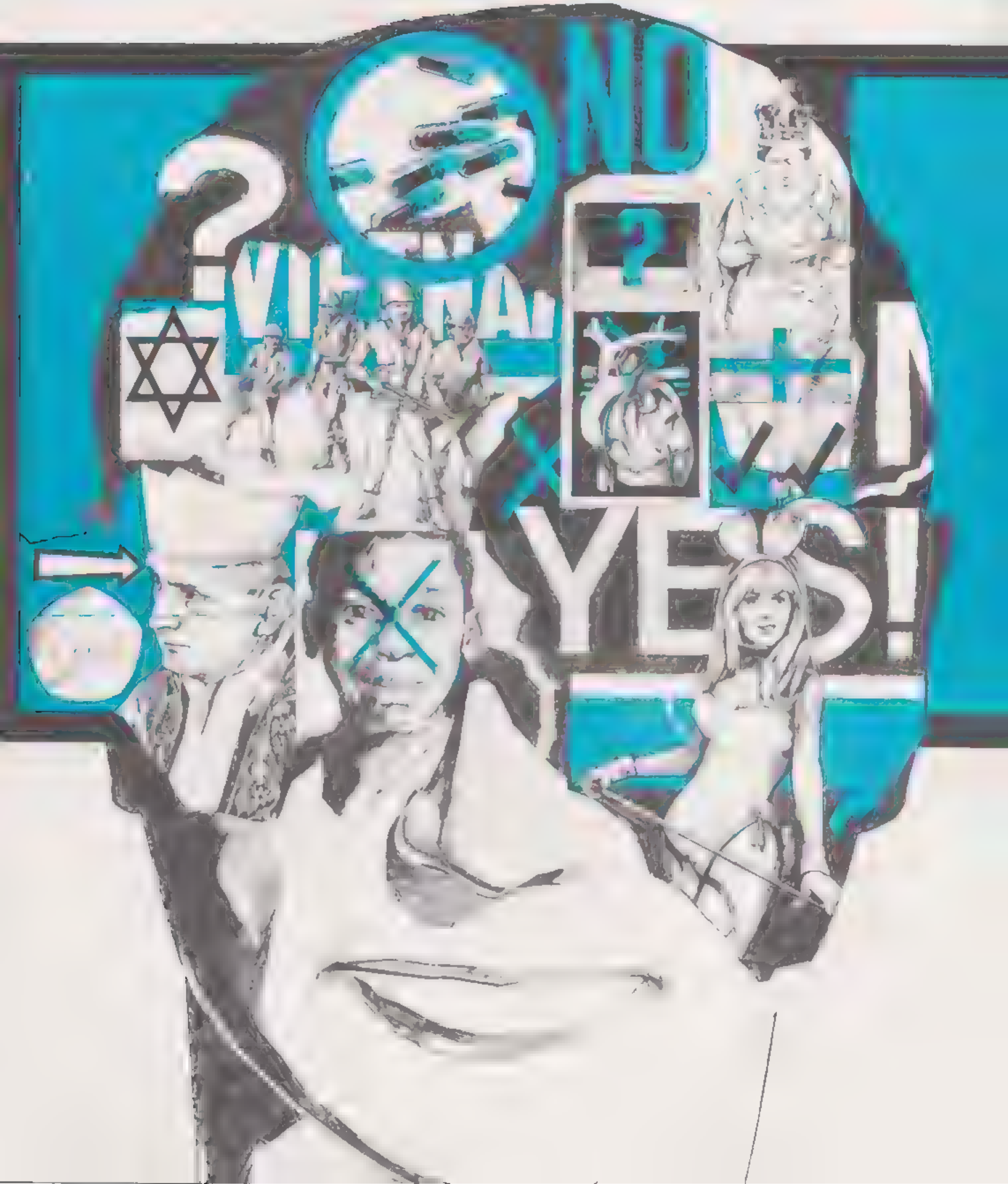
The Editors of 'Science', for Fig. 7.2 of 'Imprinting', by E. H. HESS, *Science*, vol. 130, pp. 133–41, 17 July 1959; W. H. Freeman and Co. for Figs. 7.3a and b, from H. F. HARLOW, *Scientific American*, June 1959.

Unit 8

Attitudes and Prejudice



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ATTITUDES AND PREJUDICE

1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall be examining the social-psychological concept of attitudes. There are a number of reasons for our choice.

First of all, a discussion of attitudes fits well into a sequence of units dealing with socialisation (Unit 6), with personality development (Unit 7) and with the functions of the family (Unit 9). For attitudes are initially formed through the processes of socialisation (in the family and through other social relationships) and they may be considered part of one's personality.

A second reason for finding room in this course for a look at the development and the subsequent modification of attitudes is the central place this concept has in social-psychological thinking and research. This is not surprising since attitudes are a very important determinant of behaviour – though the relationship between an individual's attitudes and his behaviour is complex.

In Units 6 and 7, we have demonstrated man's dependence on his early *social* environment in showing its importance to the socialisation of the child and the development of his adult personality. We saw in these earlier units that a wide variety of influences and social learning processes shaped a child's behaviour, values and attitudes, and that it is not always possible to predict what a particular child will learn in a given context. The child has inevitably to learn to abstract from his experiences and to draw his own conclusions. For instance, what exactly does a child learn, if told to be kind to granny, but feels the parents' resentment and tension at her visit? What, if told that to lie is wrong and yet frequently hears lies told? He himself may in fact be required to lie and say that he is sorry for some lapse in behaviour when he blatantly is not sorry for it. His parents teach deliberately and consciously but also communicate their own values unconsciously, by merely being themselves, and they may in this way strengthen or confuse the meaning of their explicit teaching. What is a child supposed to learn when beaten for a misdemeanour? Does he learn not to repeat his actions? Does he learn that it is right to beat children and will adopt this behaviour when himself a father in later years? Does he learn that it is only wrong to be found out? The child may also be faced with inconsistencies between what he sees emphasised at home and what he observes outside the home. Do we really understand the conflicts and problems of, say, a Greek-Cypriot girl chaperoned and expecting to have an arranged marriage whilst at the same time being a pupil at a co-educational secondary school in London? (We focus on this problem in the TV programme which parallels this unit.)

2 THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

We are then always part of an extremely complex network of relationships and what we think, feel and do is the consequence of unique combinations of conditions. The main factors involved in these interacting relationships can be quite simply stated – what is more difficult to assess is the weighting to be attached, the importance to be given, to each of a number of simultaneous determinants in particular circumstances. Briefly, there are two types of factors we have to consider: *the characteristics of the person* and the *characteristics of the stimulus the person encounters*, that is, other people, groups, situations, social institutions, beliefs, values, ideologies, etc., as well as material objects.

Many things contribute to what we have called the characteristics of the person. These characteristics may include the residues of all his past experiences and past learning such as his values, attitudes, expectations and opinions; his habits (that is, his learned behaviour patterns) and the linguistic repertoire at his disposal. Thus, for instance, having a word for something aids the selection and recognition of visual cues from among a multitude of others. However, having a word for something may also distort what we see: having the word 'capitalist exploiter' leads to different perceptions from

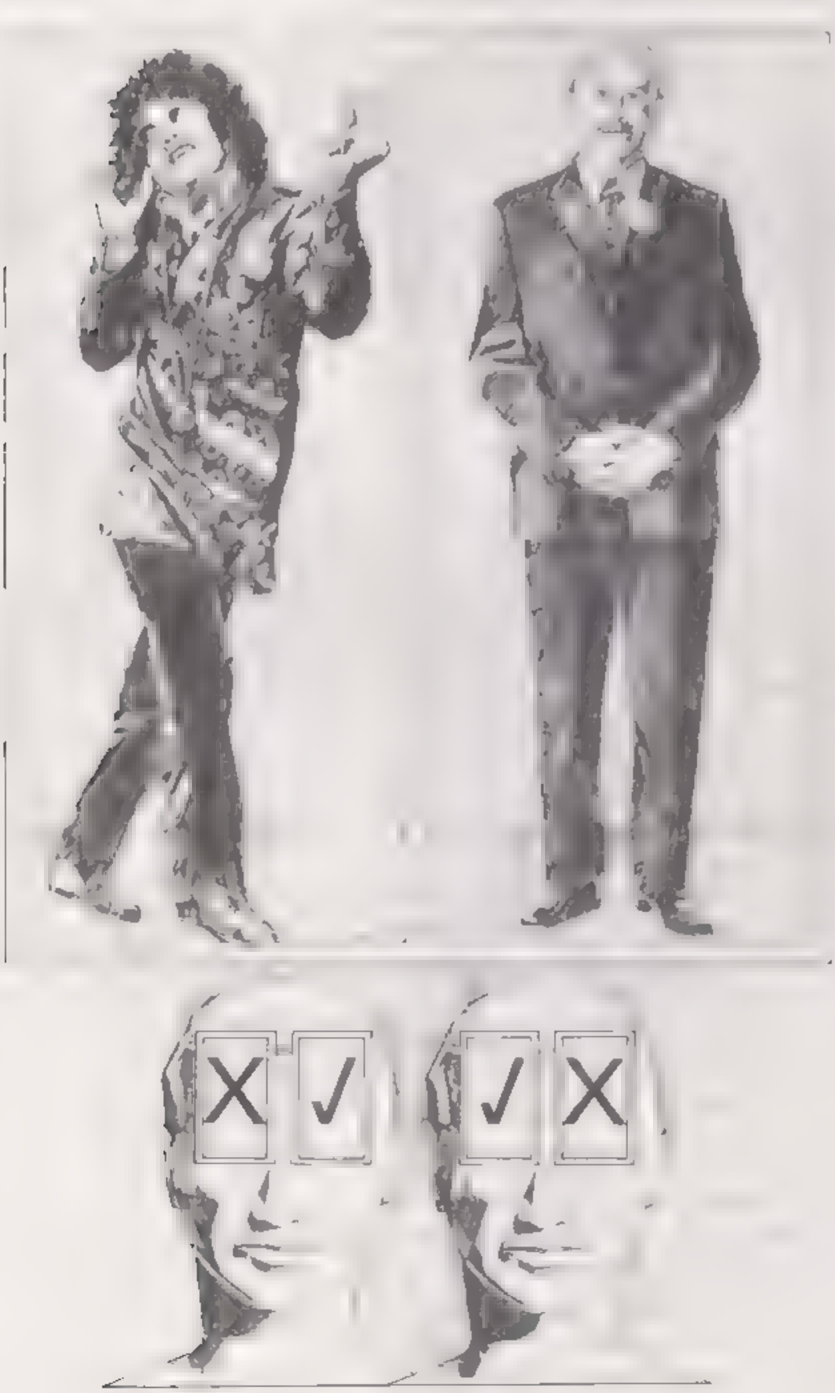


Figure 8.1 'Perception is an active process of recognising cues, selecting, organising and categorising them.'
Hence different people may gain different impressions from the same stimuli.

when we have the word 'entrepreneur' at the ready. In other words, the more developed and complex our linguistic repertoire the more we can differentiate and organise competing sensory impressions, whilst, at times, the hostile stereotypes we may have adopted distort our perceptions.

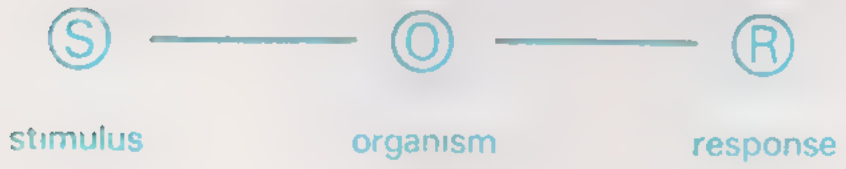
The characteristics mentioned in the last paragraph may be considered relatively stable attributes of a person; more ephemeral aspects also influence his behaviour; thus momentary physiological states influence his reactions to various stimuli. For instance, some experiments have demonstrated that a hungry person recognises food objects more quickly than a satiated person when briefly shown blurred pictures of food objects.

These passing and these relatively stable attributes of a person which we can think of as intra-psychic, that is, within the individual, affect how he perceives and reacts to stimuli outside himself.

Thus, how an individual will perceive, evaluate and react to any stimulus depends on factors within him as well as on the nature of the stimulus situation. The 'reality' we see is, therefore, always subjective but since we learn to recognise 'reality' in the society in which we live, we experience a considerable degree of consensual agreement and of knowing how to behave.[1]

Perception, in other words, is not a passive taking in of visual or other information; it is an active process of recognising cues, selecting, organising and categorising them. Hence different people may see different things when faced with hippies or men dressed in the 'uniform' of stockbrokers, when faced with the sight of two people quarrelling or a pornographic book in a shop window. Indeed, there are individual differences in how we view (and react to) the frustrations of delayed buses or cancelled trains; how we view an employer depends not only on the characteristics of the particular employer but on our values and attitudes concerning work, trade unions, the capitalist system, our own successes or failures in a chosen occupation, anxieties concerning job security and, also, the particular events of the day.

This process going on between the individual and the environment is often schematically presented in the following way:



This means that the response the person makes is not directly due to the stimulus (as in a reflex – the kneejerk, eye blink, etc.). The 'organism', that is, the person with all his unique characteristics, intervenes, affects how the stimulus is perceived and how he will react to it.

What has been said so far indicates that, as we put it, what a

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[1] Those of you who are also taking the Arts Foundation Course may like to compare this concept of reality with the one given in Units 25 and 26 on Descartes.

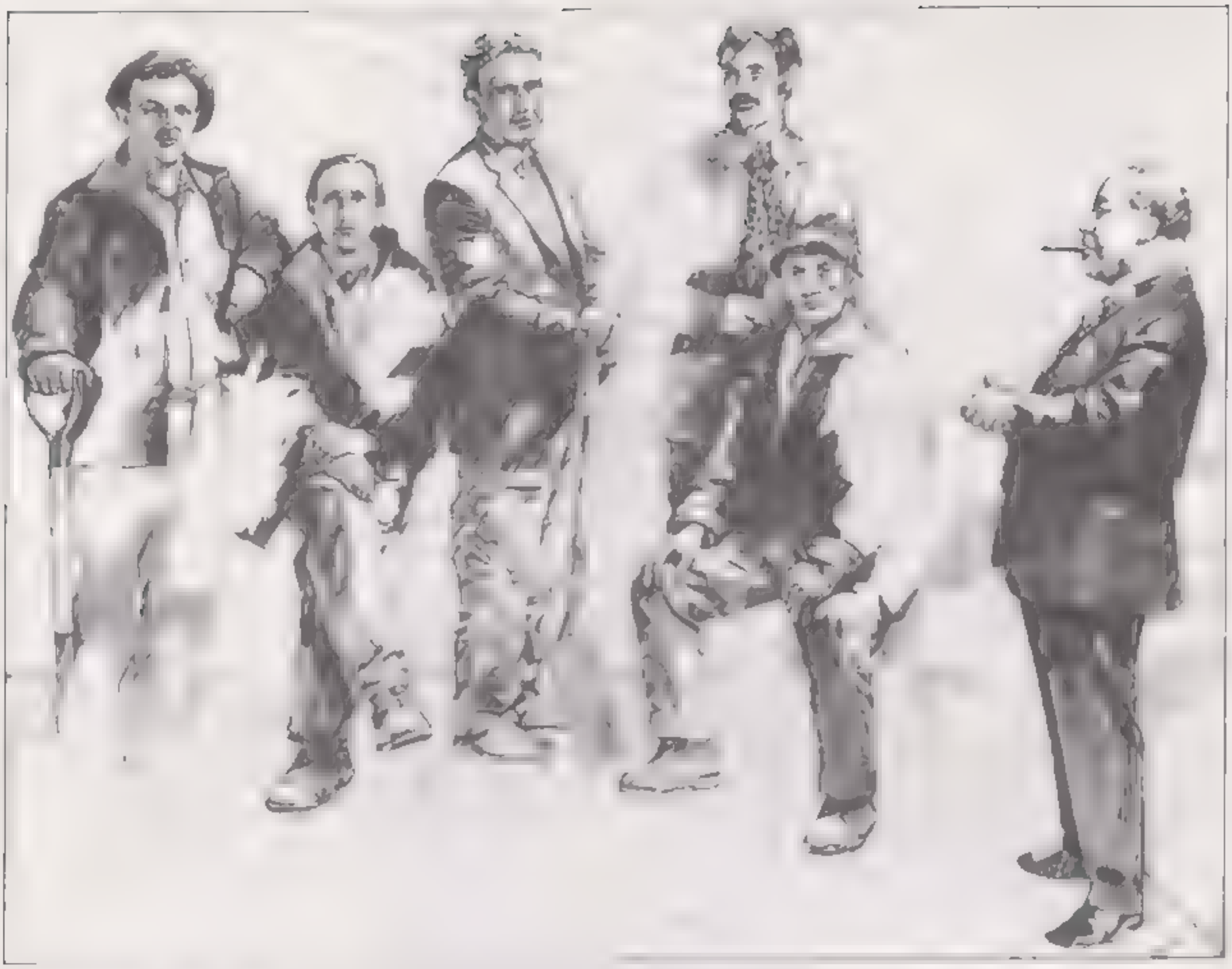

Figure 8.2 Our attitudes influence what we perceive. The manager looking on this group of workers may see them as being idle. The workers may think of themselves as taking a well-earned break.

person thinks, feels and does is the result of a great many intrapsychic *and* situational determinants.[1]

3 THE FORMATION OF ATTITUDES

We all use the word 'attitudes' in everyday language and a psychologist uses the word in very much the same way. However, he requires a precise definition and though not all psychologists would define attitudes in exactly the same way, their definitions have certain similarities.

Gordon W. Allport (1935) perhaps provided the most widely quoted definition. He says,

> an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.

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[1] Sociologists, on the whole, concentrate on studying the situational determinants of behaviour; they are interested in studying the social institutions (such as the family, which will be discussed in Unit 9) and the social structure of a society; one might say they are interested in patterns of social interactions rather than in the characteristics of and the differences between the individuals whose behaviour they study—a sociologist, for instance, might explain an individual's behaviour as being due to his filling a position in the social structure or in a rôle system. Psychologists may be said to be interested in intra-psychic processes and states and social psychologists (of which the present writer is one) are concerned with the interaction of an individual with his social environment.

These somewhat different approaches to the study of behaviour are not contradictory or mutually exclusive—they complement each other and our understanding of human behaviour.

Milton Rokeach in the article in the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, which comes with this unit, says,

> an attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner

Both these definitions suggest that attitudes 'predispose us' to perceive and to behave in given ways and that they 'exert a directive influence' on our behaviour. Allport stresses that they are *learned by experience* though temperamental and other innate factors (this means factors present at birth such as intellectual potential) may affect what we learn from our environment. In stating that attitudes are learned, we do not necessarily imply that all attitudes are learned from personal experience. We can have attitudes to management, foreigners, war, lesbianism, international trade and so on without having come into direct personal contact with any of these. What we learn are the attitudes of those we live with – through their example and from other information we are exposed to.

We have already seen in the previous units that in different cultures different attitudes to a great variety of objects and issues have developed and are considered normal. (Unit 9, in discussing the family, will illustrate this point again.) We have seen that our helplessness and dependence at birth on others for physical survival is associated with the psychological need for the love, affection, approval, regard or recognition of those who look after us in early life. This need for a positive response from 'significant others' those who play an important part in our life) has important consequences; the child in order to be acceptable learns to behave in ways thought appropriate in his society, or in a particular group of his society. How far a child will adopt the norms he perceives as being held out to him by those he interacts with in his early years depends, however, also on his *psychological experiences in the family.* It is important to realise that the child can be seen to learn essentially two kinds of attitudes in early life, or that the same attitude may have more than one origin. If, for instance, the child hates his father (because he is harsh or because he is seen as a rival for the mother's affection in Freudian terms, or for a host of other reasons) the child may generalise his feelings about his father to other authority figures'. He may later hate, dislike or be frightened of policemen, headmasters, employers and so on. We can readily see, however, that a hostile attitude to the police or suspicion of the intentions of management can also be a *cultural norm* which he observes in his surroundings. The Newsons, for instance, in their recent study of Nottingham parents and children (J. & E. Newson, 1970) found that working-class mothers threatened their children with fetching the police if they misbehaved whilst middle-class mothers more frequently emphasised that the police were there to help the child if lost or distressed.

4 THE FORMATION OF RACIAL PREJUDICE

Similarly, racial prejudice[1] might be the result of an uncritical conformity to the norms of one's society or group. Eugene L. Horowitz

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[1] Racial prejudice could be viewed as a special kind of attitude constellation implying: pre-judgement; negative evaluation of members of another group; assumed or real differences in beliefs and values between members of one's own group and members of another group.

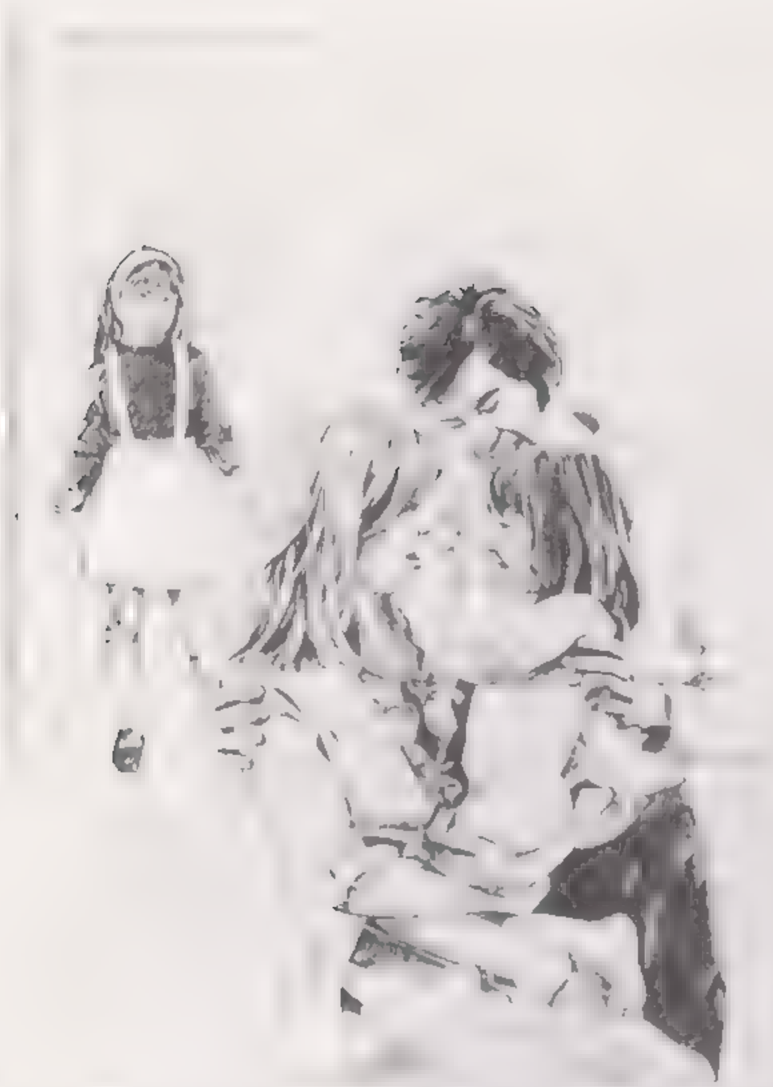

Figure 8.9 Attitudes influence what we perceive in a situation. Hence one's attitudes may be revealed in the way in which we interpret a picture. If one asks little girls to describe what is happening in the scene portrayed in the above drawing one may get very different kinds of replies.

One little girl may say that the child in the doorway looks forward to coming home from school to play with the new baby. Another, on the contrary, may say that the little girl does not come into the room as her parents only love the new baby. From the comments of the first girl one might deduce that she has a loving and trusting attitude to her family. The second girl may be said to be jealous and distrusting. Knowing what their attitudes are one may then be able to find out why they have developed such attitudes and, if need be, help change them.

is an American researcher who studied systematically and objectively the development in white children of attitudes towards negroes. In an early study in the 1930s (Horowitz, 1936) he found very little difference in the amount of prejudice in white boys who had *very differing degrees of personal contact* with negroes. He concluded that 'attitudes towards negroes were chiefly determined not by contact with negroes but by *contact with the prevalent attitude towards negroes*'. However, we shall see later in this unit that, at times, *contact* with members of groups towards whom one is prejudiced *can* lead to changed attitudes.

Horowitz' work and studies by others nevertheless indicate that racial prejudice may, like other attitudes and values we develop, be seen to be the result of adopting and conforming to the attitudes of those we live with. In others, however, the development of racial prejudice could be viewed as the result of more complex adjustments to unsatisfactory early experiences and it may act as a so-called *mental defence mechanism.* An individual who feels insecure and inferior for psychological reasons of his own or one who cannot accept his own hostile impulses may gain a measure of composure by 'projecting' (that is unconsciously attributing), for example, his own sense of inferiority or feelings of hostility onto others. In doing this he can shield his conscious mind from unpalatable insights and in this sense 'projection' can be seen to act as a mental defence mechanism.[1] Members of minority groups who may be distinct in skin colour, language, customs or clothing have in many societies and throughout history frequently served as objects for such projection. The resulting prejudice towards members of these minority groups leads to their being discriminated against, that is, they are less well treated than others in their societies. Discrimination in opportunities for education, employment and housing may over a period of time lead to a genuine deterioration and inferiority in a whole variety of ways in members of such 'scape-goated' groups and they may in this process develop the very traits which reinforce the attitudes of the prejudiced.

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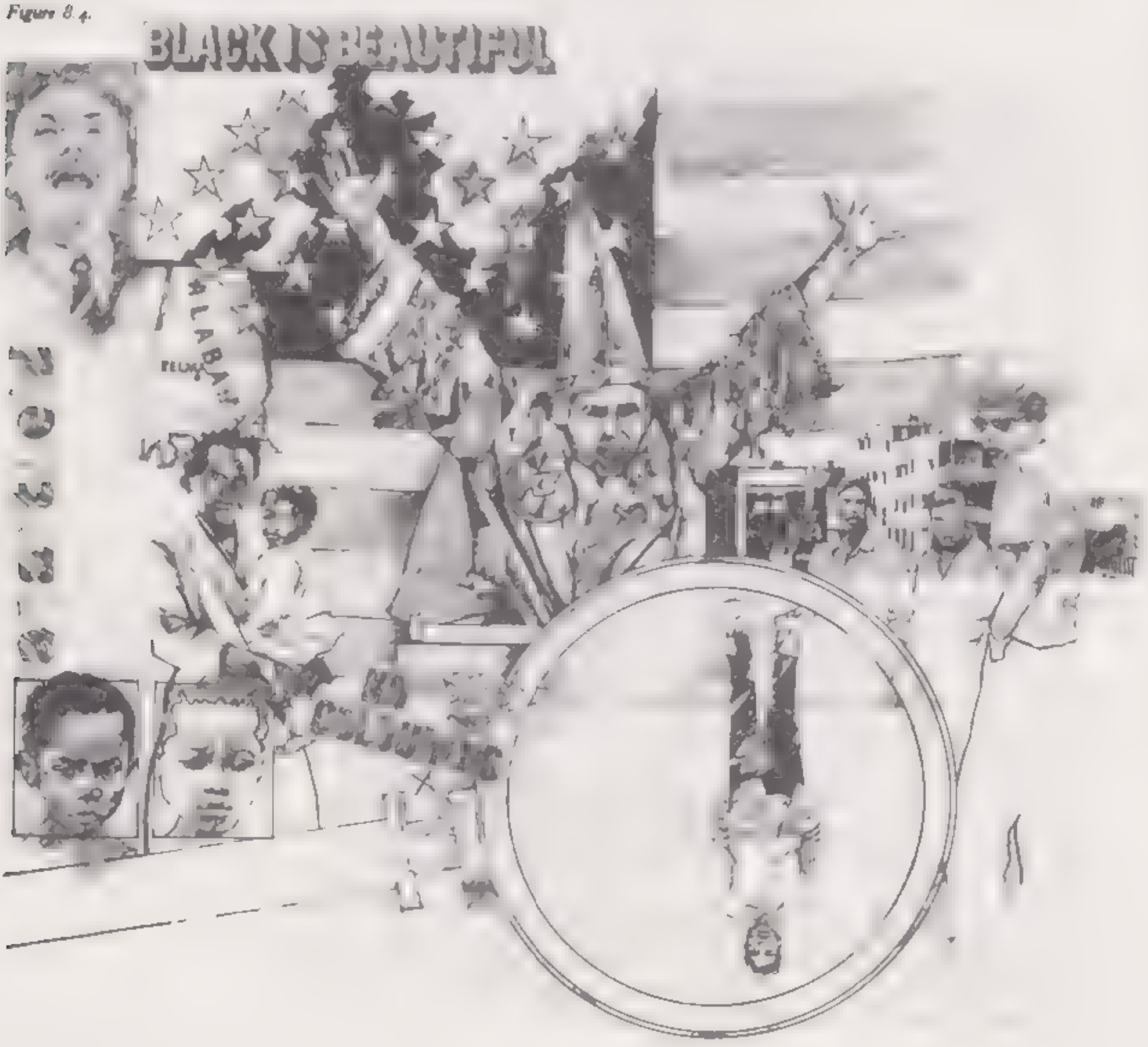
[1] A classic example of 'projection' of impulses which people do not wish to recognise in themselves is the old maid who fears sexual assault whenever she is alone with a man.

Figure 8.4.



An example from history is the mediaeval Jewish moneylender who was blamed for his 'greed' and his 'avarice'. Christians, however, were not allowed to lend money for interest until after the Reformation and money-lending which is indeed a very important activity was one of the few opportunities for making a living then open to Jews. It would have been very surprising if they had not developed traits and attitudes which were necessary to successful money-lending. From the point of view of the borrower, of course, they were oppressive attributes, found only in Jews. What is conveniently forgotten is that these traits were developed largely as a result of discrimination limiting occupational choices.

Negroes in the U.S.A. when compared *as a group* to white Americans *do* have a lower scholastic level of achievement (see, for instance, Wrightsman, 1968), a higher crime rate, a higher rate of illegitimacy and so on. All these, however, are very likely to be the result of *environmental* handicaps arising from prolonged discrimination. Nevertheless they appear to the unthinking bystander to be *negro* characteristics and further discrimination follows. Discrimination then becomes the norm not only for those who solve some private inadequacy by directing aggression and hostility outwards (and who thus displace[1] it on to innocent bystanders) but also for the majority in a society who see 'the justice' of the norms to which they conform.[2]

[1] 'Displacement' is another mental defence mechanism, that is, an unconscious process of self-deception. 'Displacement' occurs when conditions do not permit an emotion to be openly directed towards a given object; it is instead directed against another which originally had nothing to do with it. Both love and hate can be displaced –hence the phenomenon of 'love on the rebound'. Here the emotion aroused needs an outlet; a man turned down by his girl (or vice versa) often quickly finds a substitute of no apparent merit but towards whom the original emotion can be expressed. 'Kicking the cat' or quarrelling with one's wife when angered at work are examples of the displacement of aggression. In Nazi Germany Hitler encouraged the displacement of frustration caused by economic problems and defeat in war in turning the Germans against Jews and Communists.

[2] You may be familiar with other examples of discriminatory practices which, like the examples given above, are to a remarkable extent self-fulfilling prophecies.

Goffman, in his book *Asylums* (1968 , to which reference has already been made in earlier units (and in the preliminary reading list), describes how the 'social distance' between 'staff' and 'inmates' (whether these are prison warders and prisoners, nurses and mental patients, officers and men) can be manipulated to discriminate against the 'inmates'. Patients, for instance, who are allowed no responsibility for managing their everyday activities (including such personal matters as what to wear) are soon diminished in humanity and lose a sense of self-identity. They deteriorate physically (for instance, the incidence of bed-wetting may increase) and psychologically (they may become apathetic, slovenly and so on). Their miserable state, largely the result of the situation in which they find themselves, nevertheless 'justifies' the staff's perception of the mental patient as child-like, irresponsible or even sub-human. Social distance is therefore maintained and further discrimination facilitated.

Another example of discrimination is rigid 'streaming' in schools—that is, placing the child into a group of children with similar ability to his own. Several recent studies have shown that this may affect the intellectual development of children and their motivation to succeed. H. T. Himmelweit (1966), for instance, found that *allocation to a 'stream' is a more important determinant of achievement at school and in later life than a child's intelligence or his class membership*.

The discrimination practised in streaming acts as a signal to the child that he is successful or unsuccessful and he usually adapts to the expectations he perceives others to have of him. The child in the 'D' stream does not develop his intelligence to its full potential and he tends to leave school early whilst children in the top streams who may be no more intelligent than children in lower streams in other schools tend to stay longer at school.

Personal feelings of inadequacy and a marginal or low social status, of course, often go together; members of such marginal groups are, therefore, frequently among the most prejudiced in a society. A poor white farmer in one of the southern states of the United States of America is distinguished from a poor negro farmer there only by the colour of his skin – not by his educational attainments or his standard of living – and he clings to this distinction as a sign of personal merit.

Bettelheim and Janowitz (1949) in a paper we have included in the *Reader* accompanying this course have shown that after the second world war American ex-servicemen who had experienced downward social mobility (that is, they were less successful after the war than they had been before) were more prejudiced about Jews and negroes than those who had advanced from their previous civilian employment.

Prejudice is sometimes also thought of as a function of pervasive anti-democratic and dogmatic tendencies in certain people. Such people are held to have an 'authoritarian personality'. This concept was formulated by Adorno and his co-workers (T. W. Adorno *et al.*, 1950) as a consequence of their findings which developed out of their initial study of anti-semitic attitudes. They found that attitudes tended to 'cluster', that is, certain attitudes consistently tended to be associated with each other. Thus, hostility towards outsiders was correlated with submission towards the moral authority of the in-group, an exaggerated adherence to conventional values and pre-occupation with power and status considerations.

5 THE CHANGING OF ATTITUDES

So far we have been looking at the development of attitudes and of prejudice. But what do we know about changing attitudes: more particularly, since this has been the context of much of our discussion, what do we know about removing or diminishing prejudice? We shall look at this question at some length later. In the meantime, however, it is useful to note the distinction we have drawn between what we might call norm-conforming attitudes (or going along with prevalent views) as compared to 'ego-defensive'[1] attitudes (that is those attitudes which are, in part, the result of the mental defence mechanisms we described). This is important when we consider processes of change. Ego-defensive attitudes are more resistant to new influences – such as new information or pressures from others – since these attitudes are a necessary prop to a person's self-esteem. Norm-conforming attitudes lack this deep psychological significance for the individual and are mainly a reflection of the norms of the particular social groups of which he may be a member for the time being.

The paper by Kelman (1961) on 'Three Processes of Social Influence' in the *Reader*, shows that conformity to the views of others is a matter of degree. The most superficial of these processes which he calls 'compliance' implies the adoption of views for ulterior motives – to make a favourable impression on others. 'Identification', in

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[1] The concept of 'ego-defence' is more fully explained in the paper by Sarnoff *et al.* which is included in the *Reader*, pp. 168–74.

Kelman's terminology,[1] is the acceptance of opinions, attitudes or forms of behaviour because the relationship with another person or a group of people is valued; the attitudes will be maintained whilst the relationship lasts. 'Internalisation' occurs only when an attitude is adopted (albeit possibly initially through 'compliance' and 'identification') because it fits in with the existing values of the person; he makes the new attitude his own and its continuation is not dependent on relationships with others. Kelman's concepts have many applications, some of which we shall discuss in Unit 31 (which deals with the interactions of individuals in groups of various kinds). His formulations are however also applicable in our present context since they underline what has been said about norm-conforming prejudice. Through the processes of compliance and identification a person may hold hostile views towards, say, the Chinese, and discriminate against them, and yet be basically a tolerant person who may change his views and behaviour when the climate of opinion to which he is exposed changes.

Conversely, the 'prejudiced personality' is more difficult to change since, as we have already briefly mentioned, his prejudiced attitudes may serve to hide from an individual the recognition of unconscious desires which do not fit in with his conscious conception of himself. Prejudice in such people may hide inferiority feelings or may act as a channel for the displacement of hostility aroused by his personal frustrations.

6 THE ANATOMY OF AN ATTITUDE

What we have said so far indicates that the term attitude refers to certain relatively constant regularities of an individual's feelings, thoughts and predispositions to act towards some aspect of his environment. Attitudes cannot, of course, be directly or independently observed. We can only *infer* the attitudes a person has from what he says or from how he behaves. Attitudes are, therefore, abstractions, or, as some authors put it, they are hypothetical constructs. By this we mean that we assume, we hypothesise that there must exist an organisation of feelings and beliefs and action-tendencies in our minds in order to explain why *different people respond differently to the same circumstances and experiences.* Attitudes are then recognised through what people say they think and feel and by what they do. Or to use the unfamiliar, but more precise terminology of the psychologist, attitudes are usually considered to have *cognitive, affective* and *behavioural* components.

The *cognitive* component of an attitude consists of the knowledge we have about an issue and the way we think about it. We infer a person's attitude, say, for or against Britain joining the Common Market, from the kind of statements he makes. He may say, for instance, that joining the Common Market provides wider opportunities for our industries, or, on the contrary, that it would ruin our farmers and increase the cost of living.

The *affective* component may be evidenced from the emotionality or otherwise of his comments, and his expressions of anger at those who hold contradictory views.

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[1] He uses the term in a somewhat different fashion from the classical Freudian concept of identification to which reference was made in Unit 6. These departures from the original meaning of the concept are carefully explained in the article by Kelman in the *Reader*, pp. 154–60.

Figure 8.5 Strongly held attitudes may be expressed through appropriate behaviour.

The *behavioural* component is inferred from what he says he would do, or what he actually does (he may actively speak for or against an issue, join a pressure group or political party sharing his view, seek like-minded companions and so on). The relationship of these different components of an attitude is usually very close. New information or new experiences which have led to changes in the cognitive component of an attitude usually lead to a person feeling differently about the matter and behaving differently in relation to this event or issue.

One should however not assume that the affective component of an attitude is always equally strong. Two people may have similar views about an issue, say, the "iniquity of the war in Vietnam", or, the "cruelty of fox hunting", but they may differ in the degree of their emotional involvement. One of them may express his opinions but do nothing further about them, the other may involve himself intensively with activities and with other people concerning the particular issue.

In ego-defensive attitudes the affective (emotional) component of the attitudes is aroused whenever they are challenged. This is why rational argument or new information is not necessarily effective in changing attitudes. The 'facts' may speak for themselves, to those of us who are already convinced, but they are not accepted as true or relevant by those who strongly adhere to different views. (This point and the problem of changing ego-defensive attitudes is more fully elucidated in the paper by Sarnoff *et al.* (1954) in the *Reader.*

Attitudes may also be resistant to change because they are part of a 'cluster' or value system. We have already mentioned Adorno's description of the cluster of attitudes he thinks of as constituting the 'authoritarian personality'. Similarly, a liberal person is unlikely to be in favour of the death penalty or of harsh restrictions on immigrants.

(Nevertheless we are also quite capable of holding inconsistent views—this is not psychologically uncomfortable so long as we do not find ourselves in situations which 'activate' incompatible attitudes at the same time. This point will be discussed further, later in this unit.)

7 ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

At the beginning of this unit it was stated that attitudes are an important determinant of behaviour (and that this is why the study of attitudes has been so important) but that the relationship between attitudes and behaviour was complex. We then spent time exploring some aspects of the development, inter-relatedness and changing of attitudes. We also discussed how prejudice may lead to discrimination (page 70). We shall now turn to a further examination of the relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

The first point to note is that we do not always behave in accordance with our attitudes. We may, for instance, be aware of disapproval for our attitudes in a particular context. A white South African visitor to Britain, accustomed to (and being in favour of) 'segregated' facilities for the members of different races, is unlikely to object when here a negro sits down next to him in a bus. An employee who harbours resentful attitudes towards authority will not necessarily act in accordance with them but he will choose the occasions when he can (safely) give expression to them – he can be active in a militant union, make scurrilous remarks about management in the pub but behave, more or less, according to his supervisor's expectations at work. In either of these cases of course the person concerned *can* behave in accordance with his attitudes – the point we are making is that he need not do so. Furthermore, the South African can avoid coming here or he can travel by taxi rather than by bus; the employee can avoid confrontations with management and become self-employed as, say, a window-cleaner or a writer.

Another reason for the apparent discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour arises from the fact that psychologists are not very good at assessing attitudes. The problem is that we tend to assess attitudes towards concrete or abstract objects (a person, a group, an institution, an issue or ideology) and we neglect to see that for the behaviour appropriate to the attitude to emerge the attitude must be 'activated' by a *situation*. We may also have *competing attitudes* concerning a particular situation. A person may be against war and yet join the military forces of his country when it is attacked from outside. For he may have attitudes concerning duty and loyalty which can be aroused (in preference to his attitudes concerning war) if his country can be shown to be the victim rather than the aggressor.

Much work on attitudes towards members of other racial groups shows two things. First, hostility and the intention to discriminate may be stated in response to a questionnaire and yet not be acted on. A famous study (La Piere, 1934) showed that a well-dressed Chinese couple travelling with a white American in the United States were not refused accommodation. And yet, on sending questionnaires to the hotel owners concerned the majority stated that they would not accommodate Chinese people. Such discrepancies can be explained in a number of ways. One is, that it is more difficult to discriminate in face-to-face situations than on paper. (Conversely, it is easier, at times, to be 'liberal' on paper than in face-to-face situations.) Or else one might say that the 'stimulus' object – a well-dressed Chinese couple travelling with a white American – can be perceived as different from the 'stimulus' object – the word 'Chinese' on a questionnaire. Alternatively, the hotel owner can be seen to have conflicting attitudes. He may be concerned with managing his hotel so as to make a profit and yet he may wish to refuse to accommodate Chinese visitors. In practice, his business attitudes may predominate.

Another way of explaining the apparent discrepancy between our attitudes and behaviour from one occasion to the next is to realise that we do not have undifferentiated or unitary attitudes towards, say, negroes. Our attitudes may be different according to whether we look on negroes as fellow-workers, supervisors, neighbours, friends, sexual or economic competitors. Our attitude, in other words, is to the negro in a particular rôle or social context. An assessment of a general attitude towards negroes may, therefore, not predict our behaviour towards negroes in different situations.

Attitudes, then, act as a frame of reference through which we mediate and filter our experiences. There is a subtle relationship (not always easily determined) between these inner predispositions, the reality we are faced with, and our behaviour. Our attitudes and values provide us with a certain degree of stability and the possibility of having a consistent picture of the world. They offer, to use computer terminology, a standard program for processing the data. Attitudes, initially, when first evolved in a society or group of people tend to be in line with reality. We have seen many examples in previous units of societies in which people form different attitudes concerning say, the status of women or what is normal in sexual relationships and these attitudes were 'functional' for the particular societies in which they arose.

The problem of changing attitudes and/or behaviour really arises only in complex and changing societies, where we may be members of what amounts to different cultures, like the Greek-Cypriot girl we mentioned earlier. In more static societies the attitudes, values, expectations and forms of behaviour learned when young may remain appropriate right through life.

In our kind of society an individual has to live with change; technological advances at work may require the learning of new skills and adaptation to changed status relationships. The arrival of immigrants or a motorway may alter the character of one's neighbourhood. A wife who earns, possibly more than her husband, may affect the view the latter takes of himself as the head of the family. Change is often painful, particularly where attitudes are involved in which we have an emotional investment. We can shield ourselves against unpalatable insights by avoiding or discounting unwelcome ideas; we can read newspapers which propagate the political views we already hold, and we can and do choose friends who support conceptions we already have of ourselves. Bias, low status and ignorance can be attributed to communicators whose views we dislike and this makes it easier to ignore what they have to say.

However, attitudes and/or behaviour can, under certain circumstances, be changed by new information (reaching us through personal relationships or from the mass media). A more detailed examination of the circumstances and situations in which we may be likely to be influenced by the perceived expectations of those we are with and/or new information will form the subject matter of Unit 31 (Stability and Change in Social Groups) and Unit 36 (Diffusion and Acceptance of Change).

8 COGNITIVE DISSONANCE THEORY

Here we turn our attention to a different and very interesting problem. In discussing the relationships between attitudes and behaviour we have, broadly, defined attitudes as learned predispositions to perceive, evaluate and react. From this one would normally assume that one would have to change people's attitudes before one can expect changes in their behaviour.

The reverse, however, may be the case. A very interesting set of ideas has been put forward by Festinger (1957) in his so-called 'cognitive dissonance theory'. Briefly, this theory is based on the common-sense assumption that the human mind has a strong need to keep various cognitions (information, feelings, values, beliefs) consistent with each other. (We have already seen examples of this tendency when we earlier referred to 'attitude clusters'.) A state of cognitive dissonance is said to exist when various mental cognitions are in conflict with each other.

As a consequence, psychological discomfort or tension then arises which *motivates* the person to achieve consonance or, as some related theories call it, balance or congruity. Festinger's conceptualisations have become well known, because, unlike other theorists who are only concerned with the 'internal' mental balance of cognitions, he has applied his theory to inconsistencies which may exist between a person's *actions* and his values, beliefs or knowledge. In his view inconsistent or dissonant actions are a force for attitude change, since an action, once engaged in, cannot be undone whilst one's evaluation of one's behaviour or one's attitude to others can be adjusted to be in line (or consonant) with one's actions.[1]

If the assumptions of this theory are accepted (and there are many experimental findings supporting these assumptions though the results of some of these are disputed by other theorists and researchers, very interesting practical conclusions may follow. In the context of this unit we might ask whether it might be possible to reduce racial prejudice, not by educating people to have 'better' attitudes (and we have already stated that this might be difficult since information can be distorted), but by putting people into situations where they *have* to mix with those towards whom they feel prejudiced? Since they cannot undo the fact of their being there, their attitudes may have to fall in line with their behaviour. Would they begin to feel and think differently about members of the other group? Deutsch and Collins (1951) studied such a change of attitudes in white people in New Jersey and New York, who, because of their need for housing, had accepted accommodation on racially integrated housing estates. A considerable improvement in their attitudes towards negroes followed; the changes depend on a number of factors. First, a certain moral tone, a standard of behaviour is set (in this case) by a housing authority, or in other cases through anti-discrimination laws. Discrimination and prejudice are then officially defined as improper.

Second, 'enforced contact' (i.e. the white people on this housing estate had not *genuinely* chosen to live there, they were forced to accept housing on these estates by their desperate need for homes), leads to attitudinal and behavioural changes *if* the objects of the prejudice do not conform to the stereotypes believed about them by the prejudiced.

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[1] The mental defence mechanisms to which reference was made earlier in this unit (and others not here introduced) could also be viewed as dissonance reducing. However, these processes were seen by Freud who first proposed their existence as being *unconscious* mental adjustments—their very purpose to hide unwelcome insights into himself from the individual's conscious mind. Cognitive dissonance reduction as described by Festinger could take place on a conscious level or happen without conscious awareness. The Freudian mechanisms refer to more deep-seated and more extreme imbalances and adjustments than does cognitive dissonance theory. Nevertheless here emerges an interesting continuity in psychological thought—the human mind's abhorrence of inconsistency and imbalance.

Third, there are opportunities, like on a housing estate, of meeting people on an *equal-status basis* – e.g. mothers meeting other mothers when using the launderette or when fetching their children from school.

Similarly, Stouffer (1949) and his fellow researchers found during the second world war that the attitudes of white American soldiers towards negro soldiers improved when they had experience of serving in integrated platoons or companies this was then a radical experiment but is now the universal practice. The improvement in attitudes was particularly marked when the two races shared combat experience – though relations were less cordial at base camps.

This finding is also paralleled by other studies · thus it was found in a study of New York Department stores Harding & Hagrefe, 1952) which employed negro shop assistants for the first time, as a result of legislation against discrimination, that white employees accepted these new rôle relationships. However, they did not wish to become personal friends of negroes or eat with them any more readily than those who lacked such 'equal status' experiences.

In the study of integrated housing estates, as in the one example we quoted, it is frequently found that relationships and attitudes improve at a *personal* level since this is where contacts are made. In studies of integrated work situations as in the two other studies we quoted, contacts are job or rôle related and do not affect private relationships to any great extent.

Gordon W. Allport (1958) in reviewing relevant research stressed four aspects frequently associated with a reduction in prejudice and conflict: equal status, common goals, dependence on each other and support from laws, customs or authority.

Cognitive dissonance reduction, then, is a very finely balanced adjustment between present attitudes, values and knowledge and new experiences.

Whether contact, enforced or otherwise, with groups of people hitherto shunned, leads to attitudinal and behavioural changes depends on many personal and situational factors. The somewhat optimistic lessons to be learned from the studies we quoted for improving race relations may well be out of date. We have no *research* evidence at the moment of going to press on the influence of such new factors as the changed self-image of the negro, the rise of Black Power movements and the resulting fear amongst the white population.

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Unit 9

The Family and its Functions

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THE FAMILY AND ITS FUNCTIONS

1 INTRODUCTION

The subject of this unit is the family. We will be discussing the varying forms of the family in different societies, as well as some of the underlying regularities. But before getting down to details it may be helpful to indicate how this unit fits into the course as a whole.

In this part of the course (*How people live in societies*) we are moving up the scale from what could be called the smallest entity of interest to the social scientist (the individual) to larger systems. So far we have been considering socialisation, and the psychologists, taking the individual as their focus of interest, have discussed the formation of human behaviour patterns and attitudes. In this unit we move up to the next level, that of the family, before going on to consider larger-scale entities like social classes or the state.

This unit also ties up with the units immediately preceding it so that there is a certain overall unity to this block. First it throws further light on the whole process of socialisation – a central theme of this block – since it is within the family that the important initial stage of socialisation takes place. Second, it further illustrates another central theme of the block: the fact that cultural patterns are learned, and vary as between different societies; what seems *natural* to us is merely what we happen to be used to. In Units 6 and 7 this was applied to personality and to the different roles of male and female, in Unit 8 to the formation of attitudes. In this unit it is applied to the family.

This unit is also relevant for sociology as a discipline. *The family* is one of the major recognised areas of study within sociology – not surprisingly, since it is an institution which in one way or another occurs in every society. In studying the interrelatedness of society we are constantly brought back to the family as one of the most basic of all social institutions.[1]

The study of the family can thus act as another illustration of the three sociological points made in Unit 5: man's propensity to form social groups (e.g. the family) involving social relationships; the interrelationships involved in society between different social institutions (e.g. between the family and other social institutions); finally, the possibility of many different cultural forms (in this unit different forms of the family).

2 THE FAMILY IN HUMAN SOCIETY

In one form or another the family is universal in human society.[2] Whether among the wandering Bushmen of the Kalahari desert, the pastoral Fulani of West Africa, industrial Britons, peasants of

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[1] This came out, for instance, in the television case-study for Unit 5 of the interrelationships set up by a playgroup; one of the series of links which formed the social 'glue' in the community were those between families.

[2] This statement is sometimes disputed (see e.g. the discussions in N. W. Bell and E. F. Vogel (eds.) *A Modern Introduction to the Family*, Collier-Macmillan, London, 1968, Part 1, and P. Bohannan and J. Middleton (eds.), *Marriage, Family and Residence*, Natural History Press, New York, 1968, Part 4); but in a general way most sociologists would accept it.

India – in whatever form of society we look we always find the family.[1] The detailed form of the family, however, is not everywhere the same. There is a clear contrast with animals here. Apes, for instance, have families which are superficially not unlike human ones, but the family life of apes is inflexible within a species - whereas the cultural flexibility of man makes possible great variations in family life.

The existence of these variations is something that is perhaps difficult to appreciate when one is acquainted with only one's own form of family. It is easy to assume that because we know so much about the family from our own intimate personal experience, we therefore have a full understanding of it as a social institution, or, in particular, that we know how the family *ought* to be constituted and the *natural* form it should take. In fact, just because this is a subject in which our emotions are involved it is hard to study it objectively. We tend to want to argue about what *ought* to be rather than to look coolly at what *is*.[2] However it is one of the first principles of sociology that we must both try to gain a broader picture than the one we have personally experienced and at the same time emphasise empirical investigation rather than moralising about rights and wrongs. Looking at different societies is a good illustration of both the difficulty and the value of doing this.

Some examples of the possible variations are presented in the television and radio programmes, and in the selection in the *Reader*. Even from these examples – very few in relation to the whole range in the world – you can see something of the possible variations. Sociologists[3] have suggested classifications of these different forms of family system which help to reduce these many differences to some sort of order. The next section presents some of the main patterns sociologists have found in family form, and the terms they use to describe them.[4]

3 THE FORMS OF THE FAMILY

The basic group of a married couple and their children – the form known as the *nuclear family* – is found in all societies.[5] In some societies, particularly in industrial countries, it exists in a relatively independent form. A similar term, used, for instance, by Gavron in her account of the British family today, is the *conjugal family* (Gavron in the *Reader*, p. 199). This term also refers to the independent nuclear family, laying particular stress on the importance of the relationship of husband and wife. Some authorities argue that this is the main family type towards which other types, such as the Japanese or the African, are developing (see Goode 1963).

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[1] There are various definitions of the family, and controversies and problems involved in each. For present purposes I am adopting Murdock's well known definition, '*The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the socially co-habiting adults*' (G. Murdock, *Social Structure*, Macmillan, New York, 1949, p. 1).

[2] A point also brought out in the discussion about 'normative' versus 'empirical' approaches in the first radio programme.

[3] As explained in Unit 5, I am using 'sociology' to include what is sometimes distinguished as 'social anthropology'.

[4] Throughout the rest of this section the first introduction of these technical terms will be *italicized*.

[5] Possible exceptions to this are discussed in Bell and Vogel, *op. cit.*, Part 1 and M. F. Nimkoff (ed.), *Comparative Family Systems*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1965, pp. 14 ff. See also note 1 on p. 3.

In many societies the groups that live together and regard themselves as one family are larger than the nuclear family. The size can be extended more than one way. One is according to the *generations* comprised in the family. In some societies, like, for instance, the Yoruba of West Africa or the peoples of northern India, what is locally regarded as the family includes more than just two generations. There may, for instance, be grandparents living with both their children and their grandchildren. This is not the most common British or American pattern, but is very common elsewhere in, say, Africa, or *perhaps* at earlier periods in England.[1] A sociologist calls this type an *extended family*[2] and would draw out an example of it as in Figure 1. This extended family may continue to live together even when the first generation is dead. Thus in our example, the brothers, C, D, and E (and their wives and children) may continue to live together even after the deaths of A and B, and it may not be until yet another generation is born – or until there is some particularly violent quarrel – that they split up. This is a typical situation in the West African Yoruba family,[3] for instance, where one may well find thirty or forty or even more people living together

An Extended Family

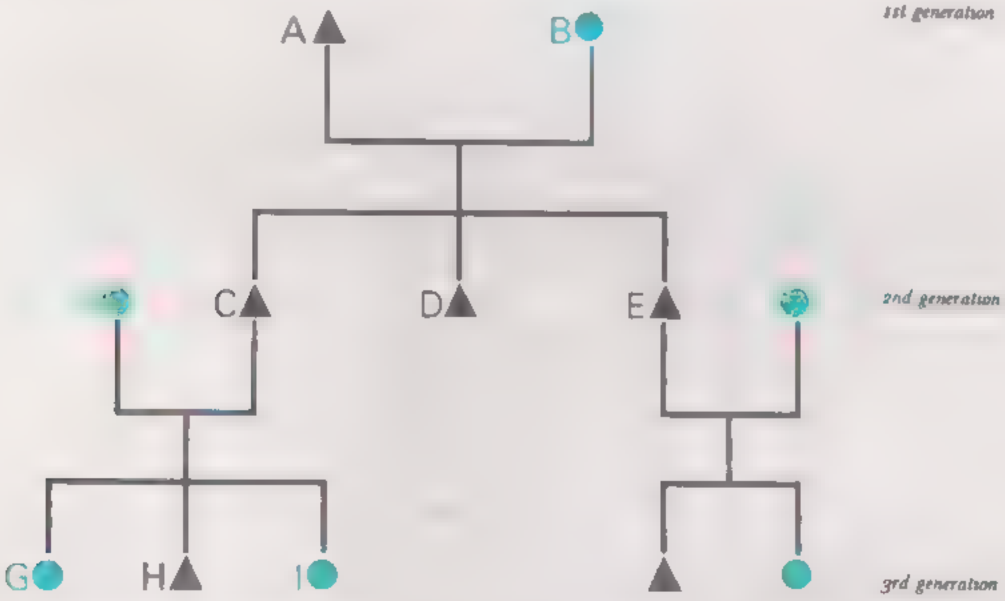

Figure 9.1 In this standard diagrammatic form ▲ refers to a male, ● to a female; lines downwards = descended from; and └┘ means 'is married to'. Thus, A is married to B and they have three sons, C,D,E; C is married to F; and the children of F and C are G (a girl), H (a boy) and I (a girl).

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[1] Or so it used to be assumed. Some doubt has been shed on the English evidence, however, by some recent work which suggests that the nuclear family has a longer history in England than was once thought (see P. Laslett, *The World we have Lost*, Methuen, London, 1968, especially pp. 21, 89 ff.).

[2] On various senses of this term see C. C. Harris, *The Family*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1969, pp. 82–7.

[3] Described in the radio programme associated with this unit.

A Joint Family

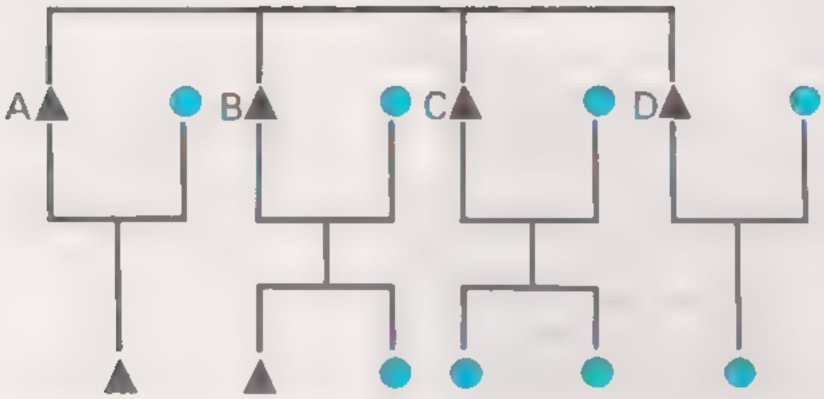

Figure 9.2 The centre of the family is the group of brothers A, B, C and D, though other relatives may also be attached to this central group

and regarding themselves as one family – the grandparents, their sons and their wives, and the grandchildren (including the grandsons' wives if any). As indicated in the radio programme this whole family group forms a unit for some economic purposes, for social security, and to some extent for political activity.

A *joint family* (like the Indian family shown on television) is a type of extended family in which particular emphasis is laid on living together and always having at its centre a group of brothers and their wives and offspring. An example is represented in Figure 9.2 and has been illustrated in the television discussion.

Another way in which the size of the family can vary is according to the *number of spouses* considered normal. The *monogamous family* (one wife to one husband) is relatively rare as an ideal. It has been calculated in one study that *polygamy* – the acceptance of more than one legal spouse at a time – is the approved pattern in about 80 per cent of a sample of *societies* throughout the world.[1] The more common form of this is when one man can be legally married to more than one woman (the type known as *polygyny*). This is widespread in Africa and in Muslim countries generally (Islam approves up to four wives).

A Polygynous Family

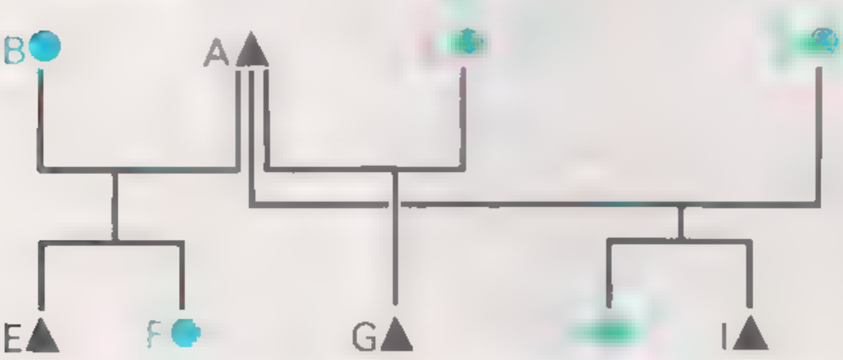

Figure 9.3 The man A has three wives (B, C, D) and five children; E and F by wife B, G by wife C, and H and I by wife D.

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[1] G. P. Murdock, 'World ethnographic sample', *American Anthropologist*, 59, 1967. The exact figure depends of course on just what is defined as *society* and there is some controversy about the analysis. In terms of actual *practice*, as distinct from the *ideal* pattern, the majority of the world's population has only one spouse at a time.

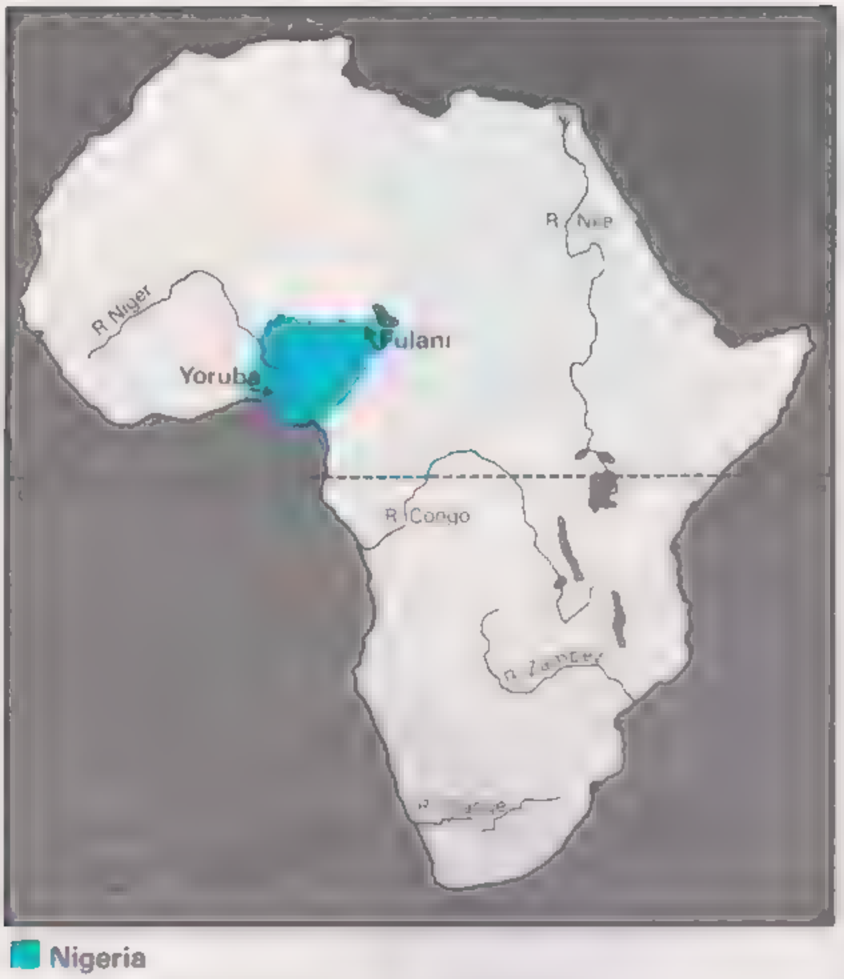

Figure 9.4 Map showing location of the Yoruba and Fulani peoples.

This does not of course mean that *every* man manages to get more than one wife, but some men do and the result is a *polygynous* family. This can be represented as in Figure 9.3. Among the cases referred to in the various materials supplementing this text, we can mention the Yoruba and the Fulani[1] as examples, both of West Africa. There is not space to digress on the various implications of this type of family, except to remark that in societies in which polygyny is allowed, many women prefer to live with a husband who has several wives. For in a society without a developed technology, the various domestic tasks needed to keep the household running are very arduous indeed except in a large family with a number of adult women to share the work. Thus, though there are always potential frictions, there is also commonly both co-operation and friendship between co-wives in polygynous families.

The other form of polygamy is when more than one husband is allowed per woman (*polyandry*), thus giving rise to the *polyandrous family*. It is not common and occurs mainly among a few peoples in India (including the people of Andheri, the village in the Himalayan foothills discussed in the television programme). It will not be discussed in detail here.[2]

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[1] Described in the *Reader*, pp. 183 ff.

[2] Those who wish to follow this up may consult K. Gough, 'The Nayars and the Definition of Marriage', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 89, 1959, 25–34 (reprinted as Chapter 5 in Bell and Vogel, op. cit. and Chapter 3 in Bohannan and Middleton, *op. cit.*), and G. D. Berreman, 'Pahari Polyandry', *American Anthropologist* 64, 1962, 60–75 (reprinted in Bohannan and Middleton, *op. cit.*).

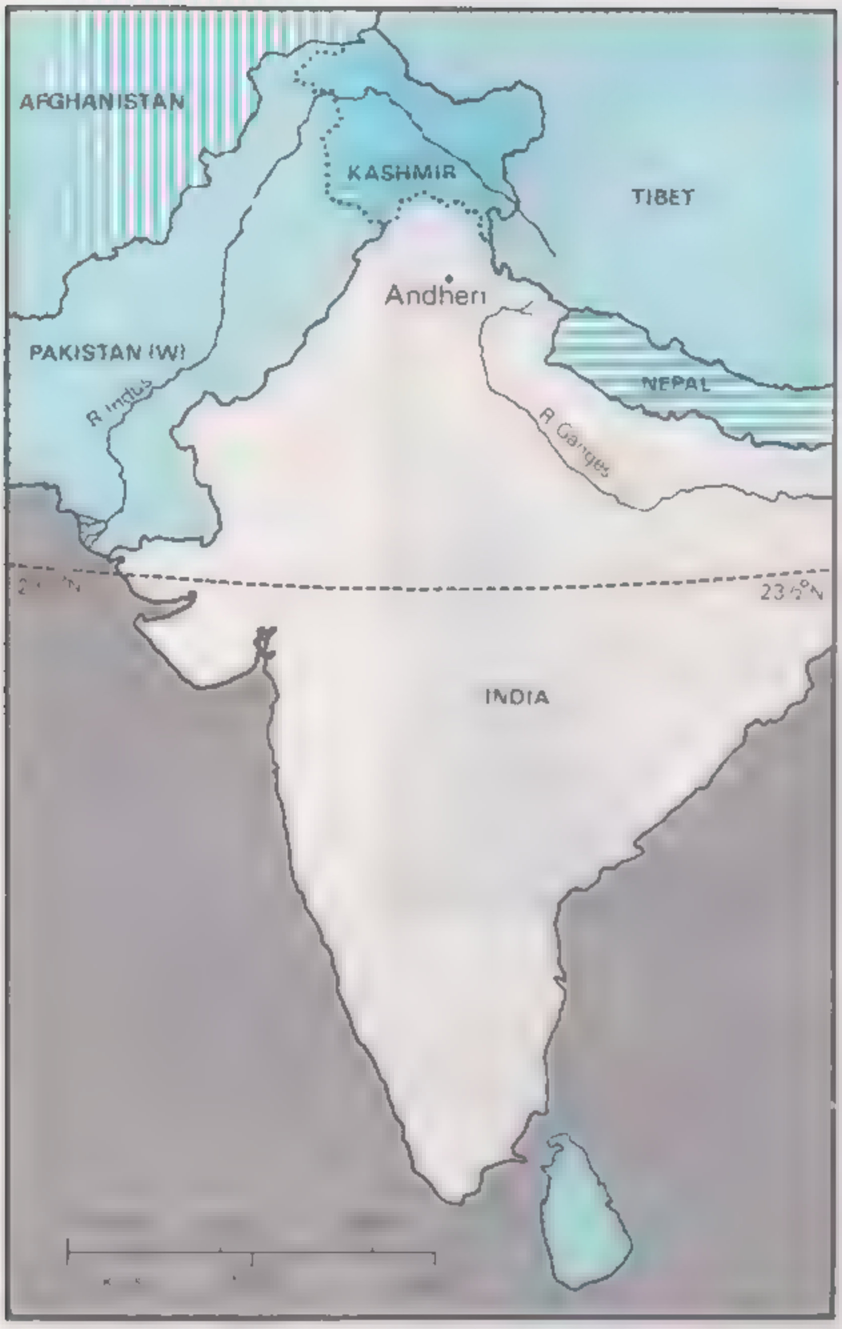

Figure 9.5 Map showing location of the village of Andheri.

The various types of polygamous families (whether *polygynous* or *polyandrous*) are generally referred to as *compound families*. As can be seen, they consist of a number of little sub-families or nuclear units. Thus in Figure 9.3 there are three nuclear families within the compound family as a whole, each sharing A as the father; that of the couple A and B and their children (E and F); of A and C and their child (G); and of A and D and their children (H and I).

So far we have looked at different forms of the family mainly in terms of its size[1] which, in turn, depends on the number of generations and spouses included within it. But there is a further type of difference that must now be considered.

This is the type of *recruitment to the family*. In British society the father's line is more important for most purposes. We take our surnames from our fathers and titles are inherited through our fathers not our mothers. But in some societies this position is reversed. This is referred to as the *matrilineal* system. In these societies it is the *mother* who is important in reckoning descent, inheritance or succession. A child's place in the society is decided through his relationship to his mother and her family, and the father is of little account for this purpose (though he may have a very close personal tie with his children). In these societies the bond between mother and child tends to be closer than between wife and husband.[1] As the matrilineal Ashanti of Ghana put it, 'Your mother is your family, your father is not', and any other practice would seem foreign to them.

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[1] Not *all* nuclear families are smaller than *all* extended or compound families – but they tend to be in general.

The British and similar systems would in turn seem strange to certain other peoples who lay even more stress on the father's side than we do. In a strict *patrilineal* system the mother's relations are of no account at all as far as residence, succession and inheritance go. One would not encounter there the common European or American pattern of a man taking a certain responsibility for his wife's ageing parents, or the grandchildren thinking of their mother's parents as equally close relations to their father's. To some extent the British or American case (often termed *bilateral*)[2] is a kind of half-way type – the father's side is certainly stressed more, but both sides do play some part.

Which system of reckoning descent is used (matrilineal, patrilineal or bilateral) obviously affects the nature of the family. In patrilineal systems there tends to be a clear-cut and stable marital unit,with the father often very much the head. In matrilineally-based families, by contrast, the marriage tie tends to be much less important than that between the children and their mother's relations, from whom they will inherit their name as well as property and hereditary titles.

It will be obvious from this discussion that there are many different forms of the family; there are variants depending largely on generation range (nuclear as against extended families), on number of spouses (monogamous as opposed to compound families) and on the type of recruitment (patrilineal, matrilineal or bilateral). Some of the technical terms which sociologists find convenient for describing these common patterns have been introduced here. There are also a number of other terms and controversies which may be encountered in further reading but which need not be pursued here.

What is essential to notice is not so much the technical terms or the detailed classifications, as the great variety in forms of the family. In glimpsing this range of variety we realise that there is no reason to suppose that amid all these many variations our own particular form of the family is the only, or even the most *natural* one – still less the *best*.

4 WHY ARE THERE THESE VARIATIONS IN FAMILY FORM?

This question may already have occurred to the reader. It is also a question which has teased sociologists. Why should the people of Andheri in Northern India have polyandrous families (with one woman to several husbands) while the Yoruba of West Africa have polygynous ones (based on one husband to several wives) and the British monogamous ones? Why are nuclear families characteristic of British society, and extended families characteristic of many African societies? Why do families in one society tend to be bigger than in another?

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[1] For some examples see the essays on the Ashanti and the central Bantu in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde (eds.), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, Oxford University Press, London, 1950; and D. M. Schneider and K. Gough, *Matrilineal Kinship*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961.

[2] Other suggested terms referring to much the same thing as bilateral are *cognatic* and *omnilineal*

Now it must be said at once that there is no clear-cut and definite answer to the general question of why there should be variations at all - except perhaps for some general comment (like, say a reference to man's flexibility or to variations in culture) which does little more than repeat the question in different words! Even to the more specific question (for example, why the Andheri people have polyandrous families) it is difficult to give specific answers – certainly, to give answers that satisfy everyone. There have been attempts, however, at least to throw light on these controversial questions. Even though (or perhaps because) there are no simple answers, it is worth while at this stage to look briefly at the kinds of answers that have been attempted, both to gain some acquaintance with the kinds of factors sociologists take into account, and also to illustrate the fact that one comes up against again and again in sociology: that there are often no simple answers to simple-sounding questions. [Before proceeding further the reader may care to jot down possible answers that occur to him and compare them with what follows.]

The kind of answer that immediately occurs to many people is in terms of the *individual's* wishes and urges. Thus it might be argued, for instance, that the Yoruba have decided to have polygynous families in order to satisfy the individual male's desire for more women – hence the practice of having several wives to one husband. Or again, monogamy might be explained by saying that there is some deep instinct in the individual which makes it natural for him to want to stay with just one mate.

Now this kind of explanation sounds attractive at first hearing. It seems common-sensical, and just the kind of explanation that we tend to employ often enough in everyday life. But there are problems about it.

In the first place it is a rather selective explanation. Take the Yoruba case. It is assumed that the decisions about polygyny are all made by *men*. And yet it would be equally plausible to suggest that *women* often have very great influence in matters of this kind. It is scarcely scientific just to look at the (supposed) desires of one group and ignore others. Indeed it is not even *all* men who are involved if the explanation has any truth. For the fact that some men have managed to marry several wives and thus set up polygynous families means that others have no wives at all.[1] It would seem to be in the interest of the latter group *not* to have a polygynous system. The situation is therefore not so simple as this initially plausible explanation would suggest.

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[1] It is not always quite so simple as this, since the sex ratio varies from area to area and the fact that women tend to marry earlier than men means that there are in a sense more marriagable women to go round. Still, despite this, there is a broad tendency in polygynous societies (particularly those in which powerful men can marry large numbers of wives) for some men not to be able to marry at all or to have to wait till a relatively late age before gaining a wife.

Such an explanation may perhaps seem satisfying when applied to a single society. But it fails to explain why other societies are different. Do men not have similar desires in monogamous Britain, or in the polyandrous groups of Northern India where one woman sometimes has several husbands? Does the supposed natural desire for one mate apply only to individuals in monogamous societies? If the explanation is to hold good at all it must presuppose that the individual's nature is very different in these different societies. Even if this supposition was true we would still need an explanation for why individual natures differ in this way. In other words, the suggested explanation would only push the problem one stage further back rather than solving it.

The major snag about this kind of explanation however does not lie in these detailed difficulties but in the whole approach. The assumption is that we must look at the *individual's* desires in order to explain a social practice. This gives the kind of picture that was explicitly rejected in the earlier sociology unit (Unit 5), of the individual somehow existing as prior to society, prior to the social commitments and socialisation into the recognised norms that are inevitably part of living in society. But there is no moment at which people are *outside society* as a-social beings and can arrange social institutions to fit their individual desires. To try to explain some social phenomenon totally in terms of *individual* urges and desires without regard to the way these very desires have already been socialised into the culture of a particular society is to miss the *social* nature of the very phenomenon in question. This sort of reductionist[1] explanation in terms of the a-social individual appears both false in practice and unacceptable in principle in a discipline whose basis is the essentially *social* nature of man. Most sociologists would therefore dismiss any explanation of differing family forms in individual terms.

If this relatively simple explanation will not do, is there any hope of providing some other explanation of these variations? Certainly any definitive explanation to cover every case seems doubtful (except perhaps for the somewhat circular type mentioned earlier). But sociologists and others have tried to make at least certain *connections* between particular family forms and other factors which even when they cannot totally explain the differences, do at least throw some light on them.

One set of factors that is sometimes used to explain or at any rate illuminate particular family forms are those relating to the economic dimensions of society. There are plenty of controversies here. Some would argue that family form is determined by the basic mode of production. Others that there is at least some relationship between type of subsistence and family form. For example one study suggests there is a correlation between the size of the family and the size of the food supply (this leading in turn to a certain type of subsistence): in hunting and gathering societies, like the Bushmen, the independent family is small, while in agricultural and pastoral societies, where a bigger labour force can be used, the extended family pattern is more typical.[2] This is obviously an interesting suggestion, but not all would agree with the selection of the evidence and would argue that this is in any case only a *partial* explanation.

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[1] On reductionist approaches, see P. Worsley, *Introducing Sociology*, Penguin, 1970, pp. 26 ff.

[2] M. F. Nimkoff and R. Middleton, 'Types of Family and Types of Economy', *American Journal of Sociology* 66, 1960, 215–25 (reprinted in N. Smelser (ed.), *Readings in Economy and Society*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1965).

Again, particular family forms have been correlated with particular economic arrangements over inheritance. The polyandrous joint family of parts of northern India, for instance,[1] is made up of a group of brothers who are jointly married to one woman, and who all are jointly counted as fathers of her children.[2] Property belongs to the joint family and is inherited within it. Because all the brothers share the same wife and children the possibility of having to split up the inheritance is minimised. This is in contrast to a monogamous system in which each brother would have a single wife and his own competing group of children. Fraternal polyandry therefore contributes to the continuity of the joint family in that it militates against division of the joint inheritance. Here too this is an illuminating observation but some would consider it lacking as a complete explanation. It does not account, for instance, for the many families elsewhere in India who equally prefer a system of joint inheritance but are not polyandrous.

A further set of factors often tied up with family forms are demographic factors – that is, factors to do with such things as age, sex or numbers of the population.[3] These are often regarded as very important for family form. In Yoruba country in Western Nigeria for instance, something like half the population is under 15 years of age, a very different situation from modern Britain. This may affect the nature and size of the family, in particular the relative responsibility in each society for the care of the aged. But whether one can speak of these differing demographic patterns as causal *determinants* is a matter for argument.

Again, the ratio between the sexes might seem to offer an explanation for the contrasting systems of polygyny and polyandry. An excess of women might seem to lead to a system of several wives to one husband, a shortage to the opposite. But even though partial correlations on these lines have sometimes been pointed to in particular cases,[4] as an overall explanation this does not fit all the facts. Polygyny, for example, is widely practised in most areas of Africa, and yet the sex ratio is sometimes in favour of men, sometimes of women.

The same kind of points can be made about other similar explanations in terms of connections between family forms on the one hand and such other social factors as, say, religious beliefs, political institutions or far-back historical events on the other. Connections of these kinds may often be illuminating, and frequently stir up controversy, but they seldom provide absolute and unarguable explanations.

The point of this discussion is to illustrate how difficult it can sometimes be to answer apparently simple-sounding questions, and how the obvious answers often have hidden snags or have to be dismissed when further evidence is taken into account. In fact, in one sense the general question of 'Why do family forms differ?' can perhaps never be satisfactorily answered at all. Sociologists take it as given that family forms just *do* differ. From another point of view however they are continually curious about this sort of question, though perhaps all they can find are often suggestive connections rather than full definitive explanations. It is this search for interesting connections that has stirred up so much fruitful controversy in sociology.[1]

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[1] Including the area considered in this week's television programme.

[2] The system known as *fraternal polyandry*.

[3] The subject of demography is treated in more detail in Unit 32.

[4] See for instance the initial discussion in G. Berreman, 'Pahari polyandry', in Bohannan and Middleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 160 ff.

5 FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

So far, the discussion has concentrated on the differences between various forms of the family encountered throughout the world. However, there are also certain underlying similarities.

When we consider the *functions* which these various kinds of families perform we can see that the similarities are in some respects as important as the differences. In all societies, people marry, copulate, bring up any resulting children – who in human (unlike animal) life need prolonged care for even their physical survival, let alone their successful socialisation as members of the society, and provide a background of affection and support for the individual. All these tasks are to some extent or another performed by the family throughout the world. Whether in rural India or urban Japan, the cattle-herding Fulani of Northern Nigeria or the urban agricultural Yoruba of the south, the wandering Bushmen of the Kalahari desert, the rural Irish or the urban Americans, we can trace the same basic cluster of functions being performed by the family.

The functions[2] of the family is a topic that has been much discussed by sociologists. As such, of course, it has stirred up disagreement and controversy,[3] but there is also a certain measure of agreement on the subject. It is worth discussing the functions commonly attributed to the human family in some detail.

In all human societies, there must be some accepted way of providing for both biological and social reproduction: it is the family above all that performs both these functions. Most children are born into families and are socialised by them. Marriage is always to some extent controlled by social rules and the same can be said for the family that results from it. This is very obvious in the case of the pastoral Fulani and the traditional Japanese, for example, where marriage is carefully controlled and closely related to the type of family it produces. But even in societies like contemporary Britain or America in which there is ostensibly free choice, unwritten convention and social pressures (not to mention legal rules) influence the pattern of marriage and the family that results from it. The biological processes of reproduction are thus regulated by the society and one of the accepted basic functions of the family is to act as the context within which this takes place.[1] It is also within the family – whether in India or Ireland, Britain or any of the other cases discussed – that the physical maintenance of the immature human infant and child is normally catered for. There is therefore a biological basis to the family since one of its first functions is that of reproduction. But the way in which this is *socially* managed by the society is something more than the purely biological – something which makes us speak of the family as a social institution with social functions rather than merely a biological activity.

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[1] A good example of this is the article mentioned above on p. 92 by G. Berreman on Pahari polyandry (The Pahari are the wider group to which the people of Andheri discussed in the television programme belong). This is well worth consulting.

[2] 'Function' is a term that has been used in many different senses by sociologists, a fact you may already have noticed in your reading. As far as the family is concerned, its 'functions' are sometimes those it is said to perform for other social institutions in society, for individuals or family activities generally, or for the integration of the society as a whole. (For an elaboration of this see Bell and Vogel, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 99 ff. Worsley, *op. cit.*, pp. 134 ff.) In the present package, the first sense is the predominant one, though you will probably be able to notice places where the other senses are implied too. The approach adopted here (analysing the family in terms of its functions) is a common one in sociology and is certainly illuminating for the understanding of the family. There are, however, certain problems that are raised by the 'functionalist' approach. Some of these will be followed up in the discussion in Unit 29 and you will also find some discussion of them in the set book readings (especially Worsley pp. 134 ff., Chinoy, pp. 93 ff.). There are also other approaches to the analysis of the family (particularly those which focus on the conflicts and other relations *within* the family) but which there is not space to discuss here.

[3] See references in previous footnote; also the critical essay by M. J. Levy and L. A. Fallers, 'The family; some comparative considerations', *American Anthropologist* 61, 1959 (reprinted in Bohannan and Middleton, *op. cit.*, 1968) and the references given there.

Socialisation of the child also largely takes place within the family. It is in the family circle, for example, that the infant first learns his own language – that all-important channel for becoming a member of his own culture and of the human race – as well as the local values, the local etiquette and the accepted ways of behaving to different categories of people. In the film about Ireland, for instance, we see the differentiation between the sexes starting at an early age within the family as the boys learn to emulate their father's tastes, while the little girl and her elder sisters imbibe the woman's rôle. Similar pressures are brought to bear on boys and girls within the Fulani family in a number of different ways, the boys turned towards the herding of cattle, the girls towards the dairying. None of these tasks are self-evident.In parts of Southern Africa (for instance Botswana) it is the *men* who milk the cows, not the women as among the Fulani; while in one Nigerian society (Tiv), it is the men who do the knitting, the women who do the weeding. In each case the boys and girls are socialised within the family into the adult rôles expected of them in that particular society.

In societies like Britain in which formal schools are widespread, certain aspects of socialisation are taken over from the family (education after all is one form of socialisation). But even there, as any mother of children will know, the family still plays a major rôle in the informal education of children, and in societies without the tradition of formal schools it may play an even greater part.[2] A few societies have tried limited experiments in separating young children from their families and thus removing the function of socialisation – in Russia, for example, or the Israeli *kibbutzim*. But even there the practice seems to have gradually returned to the more usual pattern – early socialisation taking place largely within the family.[3]

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[1] Even in contexts where there is a high *illegitimacy* rate it is normally assumed that the *legitimate* and approved way to produce and bring up children is within the family.

[2] The family's part in education in non-industrial societies is sometimes exaggerated when it is assumed by foreigners that in a culture with no formal schools *all* socialisation takes place within the child's own family. In fact children are often sent away for a period to other families or to a group of children of their own age, or to some outside institution like a king's court where they are in a sense *educated*, but even in these cases, of course, their own families still play a basic part in their socialisation.

[3] On these experiments see the discussion in W. J. Goode, *The Family*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1964, pp. 5–6; Bell and Vogel, *op. cit.*, Chapters 3 and 4; and Bohannan and Middleton, *op. cit.*, Chapter 13.

Another function of the family that appears to be universal is what could be summed up as social welfare. This includes both welfare in the psychological sense – the need human beings have everywhere to belong to an intimate group which will provide affection and personal security – and in the physical and social sense. It is normally the family which provides the group on which someone falls back if he is ill or poor; it is the family which rallies round at the time of death, or birth, or marriage. It has often been said that in a society like Britain which has state organised services catering for some of these needs, the family takes less part in providing social security and has thus lost some of its basic functions. This is a point that is elaborated in the radio programme when the greater importance of the Yoruba family in social welfare compared to the British family is partly explained by the fact that in Yoruba society there are no state institutions outside the family to take responsibility for problems like unemployment, illness or old age.[1] More responsibility for this sort of social welfare is thus inevitably thrown upon the family. But, valid though this argument is, one should not push it too far. A little thought will show that the family's rôle in social welfare has by no means disappeared even in contemporary Britain. Even if the state provides a hospital and a doctor, it is the family which normally has the prime responsibility for getting the sufferer there, for continuing to visit him even throughout a lengthy stay, for providing care when he comes out again. It is still the family which in normal circumstances takes the single greatest responsibility for the well-being of its members.

The functions of the family that have been discussed so far – reproduction and child maintenance, socialisation, and social welfare – are usually regarded as its most basic ones. Indeed they are sometimes reckoned such an essential part of family life that they almost form part of the definition of what we mean by *family*. But there are a number of other functions which are also significant.

In societies in which there is marked social stratification[2] – in which, in other words, there are definite inequalities in wealth, power or status between different strata in the society – one of the main ways by which an individual is allocated to one or other of these strata is according to the family into which he is born. This is very obvious in the case of a society in which there is a clear division between hereditary strata – for example castes in India. It is a little less so in societies which lay less emphasis on the hereditary ascription of position and more on personal achievement. Even there, however, the family may play a large part, perhaps larger than is often realised. In Britain, for instance, we often assume that an individual can make his own way through education and ability, so achieving the position to which he is most suited. But though there is obviously some truth in this, an important factor in determining the individual's access to education and his opportunity to make the most of it is in fact his family circumstances.[3] This function that the family so often performs in allocating individuals to social strata is usually briefly referred to as its *placement* function. As we have seen, the detailed way in which this works may vary according to the institutions and values of the particular society – and in societies in which there is little or no social ranking the family cannot place people in this way – but the family's function in this respect can be traced in a very great number of societies.

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[1] Though there are certain other institutions, like social clubs, churches or craft associations, which may provide limited help.

[2] Social stratification is discussed in detail in Unit 17.

[3] See, for example, B. Jackson and D. Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*, Penguin, 1966.

The political functions of the family are also important. These are particularly striking in societies without a centralised form of government. In a Bushman band, for instance, or some of the 'stateless' societies described later in the course (Unit 26), the family is a kind of political unit, in that political decision-making takes place through it. In other societies, relationships between families, as among the Fulani, may be relevant for political integration. Even in some relatively centralised states the family may play an important political rôle. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, for instance, (the people discussed in the radio programme) there has been state organisation for some time, but the mode of administration depended very largely upon the family. The family was, for instance, the unit for representation and office-holding, for ward organisation within the town, and for political patronage and succession. The traditional Japanese family too played a similar part in government. As Vogel puts it 'each *ie* [household] had one representative in the village councils. . . . In community matters it was not the individual who was the unit, but the household, the *ie*. . . . Each household head was responsible for seeing that members of his *ie* abided by the decisions of the community head and government agencies' (Vogel in Nimkoff 1965, pp. 288–89: the *Reader*, p. 176). By contrast in countries where, as in Britain, centralised government co-ordinates the political activity of the community, the family takes little direct political part. But even then it has some political relevance. It may act as the administrative unit for the distribution of certain benefits (children's allowances, for instance). Its general function in socialisation may also be politically relevant, for the formation of political attitudes probably takes place to a considerable extent within the family.[1] The functions of placement can also play a part in the overall political functioning of society as can the powers of patronage of the family in dealing with the problem of political succession. A final point is the political relevance of the reproduction function of the family. It is clearly part of the state's interest that its population should renew itself (and perhaps renew itself in a particular way). It has been suggested that it is basically for this reason that the state has often exercised direct or indirect control over the family by way of laws about age and type of marriage, illegitimacy, divorce, or, in some cases, welfare provisions or policies about birth control.[2]

Overall, therefore, the family can perform a number of direct and indirect political functions: acting as political units or leading to political integration (particularly in uncentralised societies or those in which the sphere of formal government is not very extensive); acting as units for government administration of welfare etc; acting as an agent for political socialisation, succession and patronage; and playing a part in the renewal of a state's population.

The economic functions of the family are significant in all societies. The fact that a family tends to be a group living together in one household, in itself gives the family an economic dimension. The family is commonly the unit for property holding, inheritance and consumption. Some indeed would argue that the economic function of the family is so important that it should form part of the actual *definition* of the family.[1]

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[1] More will be said on 'political socialisation' in Unit 27.

[2] For further discussion of this point see Nimkoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 52 ff.; R. M. McIver and C. H. Page, *Society*, Macmillan, London, 1962, pp. 274 ff.

In non-industrial contexts or where there is relatively little division of labour in the society at large, the family may be one of the main production units. In English society before the industrial revolution, for instance, it was the family that tended to be jointly responsible for such things as the production of food, the making and maintenance of clothes, the marketing of home-produced wares and so on; there was not the modern system of bakers, milk deliveries, ready-made clothes shops, laundrettes, and supermarkets, that we assume nowadays. We see a similar system in many rural and non-industrial societies today – joint economic production by the family as a unit. This economic side of the family's life may be so important that it may influence the particular form taken up by the family in a given society. The pastoral Fulani described in the *Reader* extract (pp. 183–99) are a good example here. The whole organisation of first marriage and hence the formation and type of family is closely related to the type of economy they practise, in particular the needs of the cattle herd. Again one can see from Vogel's essay (the *Reader*, pp. 175 ff.) on the Japanese family how its organisation is related to rural agricultural patterns and the demands of the farm. It has also been claimed on the basis of a survey of a large number of societies throughout the world that the size and composition of the family is closely related to the particular type of production in each society – in other words to the economic functions of the family. Thus, it is suggested that among hunting and gathering peoples a fairly small family unit is most economically viable, while in agricultural communities where a large labour force is needed for each economic unit, the size of the family tends to be larger.[2] Whatever the details of this, it is certainly clear that the family often has a function in the general economic production in society, particularly in non-industrial contexts.

The economic function of the family in consumption is also very marked – and is something which applies to industrial as well as non-industrial groups. In British or American society, for instance, the breadwinner(s) normally works outside the family, it is true, but most of what is earned is then spent on the family's needs – for food, housing, clothing, recreation and so on. The family seems to be the chief consumption unit. Some indeed would argue that even if most other functions are dropped, this one will remain as a central family activity.

A further economic function of the family is in the sphere of property-holding and inheritance. This is perhaps particularly important when immoveable property like a house or a farm is involved – when control of this capital good (perhaps joint control by the whole family) has to pass down from one generation to the next. But even moveable property – like cattle among the Fulani, money or furniture in Britain – tends to be mainly passed down within the family. The detailed ways in which this economic function is fulfilled may vary. These variations, indeed, may have a profound significance for the wider economic development of the society. It has been argued, for instance, that the much more rapid industrialisation of Japan compared to China can be put down to the different systems of inheritance within the family in the two countries. In China, property was divided up among all the sons after the father's death and capital was thus dispersed. But in Japan only one son inherited, and this made possible capital accumulation – and thus, ultimately, industrialisation.[1] A similar argument traces the influence of different inheritance systems in nineteenth-century Europe on the supply of capital and labour and hence on economic development in general.[2] In other words the relevance of the family for economic and legal arrangements in the wider society is a point to which sociologists draw attention.[3]

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[1] See, for example, Murdock's definition given above on p. 84, footnote 1.

[2] M. F. Nimkoff and R. Middleton, 'Types of Family and Types of Economy', *American Journal of Sociology* 66, 1960, pp. 215–25 (reprinted in N. Smelser (ed.), *Readings in Economy and Society*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1965).

Besides economic and political functions, one can also note the religious and recreational functions that are often performed by the family. Here again the details vary but one can commonly trace something of these even in countries (like Britain) where formal religion seems relatively unimportant. For it is on *family* occasions (like baptism, marriage, death) that religious observances are most commonly involved. In more religious societies – with Islam, for instance, among the Fulani, Hinduism in India or Catholicism in Ireland – the family carries out obvious religious functions. As far as recreation goes a certain amount of this probably always goes on outside the family. But in addition – whether we look at story-telling among African or European peasants, card-playing in rural Ireland or television-watching in contemporary Britain – the family too can be seen to carry out a recreational function for its members.

It is clear, then, that amid all the many striking differences between different forms of family throughout the world, there are certain underlying similarities. These are mainly in terms of the basic functions performed by the family: socially controlled reproduction, child maintenance, socialisation, social welfare, and the various forms of political, economic, religious and recreational functions.

These functions are all basic in the sense that they (almost) always enter in in some way. But of course the precise way varies according to the structure of the society generally. As we see, the economic institutions of the society are tied up with the functions of the family (compare, for instance, the pastoral Fulani with the agricultural Irish or the industrial British), and the political functions vary with what other political institutions there are in the society (contrast, for instance, the large contribution by the family in Yoruba society, still more in 'stateless' societies of the kind to be discussed in Unit 26, with its lesser rôle in countries like contemporary Britain).

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[1] M. J. Levy, 'Contrasting factors in the modernisation of China and Japan', in S. S. Kuznets, W. E. Moore and J. J. Spengler (eds.), *Economic growth: Brazil, India, Japan*, Durham, N. C., Duke University Press, 1955; discussed in Goode, *The Family*, pp. 114–16.

[2] H. J. Habakkuk, 'Family structure and economic change in nineteenth-century Europe', *Journal of Economic History* 15, 1955, 1–12 (reprinted in Bell and Vogel, *op. cit.*, pp. 140 ff.); also discussed in Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 118. This leads on to the whole question of the part played by the type of family in industrialisation generally and what kind of family *fits* best with industrial conditions. The subject is too large to discuss here but is touched on in the radio programme and may be followed up in Harris, Chapter 4, especially pp. 116 ff.; Goode, *The Family*, pp. 114 ff.; and the further references given in both books.

[3] The relationship between the family and the economy is discussed further in Unit 13.

You will have noticed in this section that only *certain* functions of the family have been selected. Now in one way it might be possible to extend this list almost indefinitely – so that, say, shoe-cleaning could be given as one of the functions of the family! But there are two reasons why the selection here has been limited. First the general emphasis has been on functions which have *comparative* explanatory value, that is, apply in one or another way to a wide range of societies. Clearly shoe-cleaning would not. Secondly, the selection here runs roughly parallel to the one which (under one term or another) is conventionally made in many sociology text books. The basic principle behind such selections seems to be that the functions selected are those which are in some sense 'of importance' in the society. This is clearly a controversial topic which cannot be pursued here, but will be taken up further in the discussion of the 'functional approach' in Units 29 and 30. For the present, it must suffice to notice that the selection *is* in the last analysis an arbitrary, but nevertheless a frequently proposed one.

It thus emerges that not only can we see the functions of the family as providing basic similarities between outwardly very different types of family, but that it is also essential to look at the family in a wider context – in its relation to the society at large. For the family does not just consist of the individuals who comprise it. It must also be seen – and this is a point which sociologists in particular tend to stress – in the light of the part it plays in the society as a whole. Once again we are brought back to the concept discussed in Unit 5: society as involving the interrelationships of a wide variety of social institutions.

6 THE BRITISH FAMILY IN PERSPECTIVE

It is worthwhile at this stage to sum up briefly where this takes us in the study of the British family. Much of the detailed consideration of this will be left to the student's own initiative, to follow up in the light of what has already been said, through further reading, discussion, personal observation and the completion of the suggested exercise in the assignments. But some initial points should be made.[1]

First, though there are certainly detailed differences throughout the country, the general pattern is in clear contrast to some of the other family systems we have been considering. The usual description of the contemporary British family is that it is of the *monogamous conjugal* type and that it is the *nuclear* family which is of the greatest significance. In other words, the typical British family is neither

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[1] For general discussion of the British family see C. Turner, *Family and Kinship in Modern Britain*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969; R. Fletcher, *The Family and Marriage in Britain*, Penguin, 1966 (a somewhat evaluative approach but with a great deal of relevant information); and the extract in the *Reader*, from H. Gavron, *The Captive Wife*, Penguin, 1968. Studies of particular areas include E. Bott, *Family and Social Network*, Tavistock, London, 1957; W. M. Williams, *A West Country Village: Ashworthy*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963; M. Young and P. Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London*, Penguin, 1962; R. Firth *et al.*, *Families and their Relatives*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969; J. Klein, *Samples from English Cultures*, 2 volumes, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965.

extended nor *compound*. It is also the accepted pattern for husband and wife to set up home together on marriage and bring up their children in their own household, separate from that of their parents.

It has thus become a truism to contrast the small nuclear British family with the wider ones of some other societies. However, it is also possible to exaggerate the contrast, and some sociologists, partly stimulated by findings about the significance of wider family groupings elsewhere, have pointed to the fact that even in Britain wider kinship links may be important for social contact and mutual help. As the authors of a survey of family life in Bethnal Green put it, 'We were surprised to discover that the wider family, far from having disappeared, was still very much alive in the middle of London' (Young and Wilmott, 1962, p. 12). The British family may not, therefore, be so discrete and self-sufficient as used to be assumed. Nevertheless it remains true that it is the basic unit as far as residence, reproduction and constant economic co-operation go, for these wider links are more an extended kinship *network* than close and constant enough to turn the British family into a united *extended family* of the kind observed in Africa and elsewhere.[1]

A second point about the family in Britain is that its detailed functions have not always been the same. There have been many changes in the past. This is exactly what we should expect, since, as we have seen, the family is connected with the institutions of the wider society and these have undergone many changes over the years. It is also likely to continue to change with corresponding changes in the future.

Those who find it difficult to stand back from the present situation or to look at the position without the detachment induced by a wider comparative perspective, tend to deplore these changes and have recourse to emotive words like the 'breakdown' or 'disintegration' of the family – both rather fashionable terms today. In fact when one is aware of the many different forms which families can take, it becomes apparent that changes from what happened 'in my young days' need not necessarily mean total breakdown at all merely a change from one of the many different possible forms of the family to another. Thus – to take one much quoted example – the fact that increasing numbers of married women are going out to work has been heralded by some as a sign of disintegration of the family. But when one remembers that in many other societies in the world the women have taken on or supplemented the bread-winning for the family – whether by petty trading, by agriculture or by dairy-work – without the disappearance of the family, then the British instance looks much less dramatic.

Again, knowledge of what happens elsewhere reminds us that all the basic functions of the family are still fulfilled by the British family. The family is still the recognised and approved context for reproduction (otherwise why would we still use the word *il*legitimate of children born outside the approved family?)[2] The family is responsible for child maintenance and, even now, for the basic task of child socialisation. This is particularly so in the all-important pre-school period, but, especially for children at day rather than boarding schools, the family also plays an important part in socialisation throughout childhood. The family more than any other single group is responsible for the welfare of its members, perhaps a little less so than before the development of the state welfare services, but still to a very large extent. As Gavron puts it 'the family is also supported in a great many ways by the State today, which was not true in the nineteenth century' (the *Reader*, p. 199).

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[1] A point well discussed in Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 83 ff.

[2] By *approved* family in Britain we normally mean the family consisting of *legally married* parents and their children. It may be that the approved pattern will change so as to include stable families of parents and children where the parents may be 'married' by accepted custom rather than strict law – in which case these approved families become the vehicles for the various functions discussed here.

As far as social placement goes, recent study has increasingly pointed to the important part played by family background in educational selection and achievement – so often the key to social mobility. Political functions are perhaps not very important in the British family, though family connections may still play a significant part in a political career,[1] and family background is certainly a factor in deciding political loyalties.[2] The economic functions of the family are also very striking – not so much, perhaps, on the productive side, but very clearly so as far as consumption goes. The family is indeed the main unit of consumption in the sphere of food, housing, clothes, toys, furniture, domestic appliances and holidays – to mention only a few.

The idea, therefore, that the modern British family is 'losing its functions' and thus likely to disintegrate or (more evaluatively) going into a 'decline' is not supported by sociological analysis in the light of comparative evidence. Changing the British family may be,[3] but there is no evidence that it is going to 'disintegrate' or 'lose its functions'.

In short, the British family is not a special case on its own, but is susceptible to the same kind of analysis as others by anyone who has acquired the capacity to look at his own institutions with a detached and objective eye, in the light of a knowledge of the comparative background.

7 CONCLUSION

Where has this discussion of the family taken us?

In this unit we have been examining the formal organisation of the family, in which many of the psychological relationships, discussed in Units 6–8, take place. In doing so we have found ourselves inextricably involved in looking at the family's relationships with other institutions in the wider society – a preparation for the discussion of, for instance, the wider economic or political arrangements in later parts of this course. We have also found that looking away from our immediate surroundings may enable us to look back at our own situation with a more perceptive eye.

Finally it has emerged that even so intimate and familiar an institution as the family – something so widespread that we tend to take it for granted – is susceptible to sociological analysis. Even in this simple and pervasive social institution we can see the same points as before. Man is a social animal, he forms social groups (among them the family) and, for all the detailed differences between cultures in the way of forming the family, it is always possible to trace the relationship of this particular institution (the family) to other social institutions in the wider society (even if, as we have seen, the exact relationship and its significance is often highly controversial).

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[1] For the relevance of family membership in the careers of 'top decision makers' in various spheres, see T. Lupton and C. S. Wilson, 'The social background and connections of top decision makers', *Manchester School* 27, 1959, 30–51.

[2] See the evidence cited in D. Butler and D. E. Stokes, *Political Change in Britain: Factors Shaping Electoral Choice*, London, Macmillan, 1969, that most people vote like their parents. Political socialisation is discussed further in Unit 27.

[3] Though even this may be exaggerated.

The general framework of the discussion has been what is usually called a 'functional' one – one, that is, which looks at the functions of some institutions within the wider society.[1] The reason for taking this approach is that these concepts can take us some way towards understanding family life better and saying something general about it: a point well explained in a passage in one of the set books (Chinoy: 11–16). It is also a very common approach to the study of family. But it is also worth noticing that this particular framework (or model) is only a framework. In other words, it *abstracts* certain aspects, selects them from the complex totality of reality. Now any sort of selection of this kind, any abstraction from reality, is likely to do two things. One is to illuminate reality by highlighting particular aspects (those selected in the model). The other is to some extent to *distort* reality by focussing only on the selected facets and thus, inevitably, playing down the rest. A good model can obviously be said to do more of the former and less of the latter, and a bad one the opposite. But there is always something of both tendencies. Opinions naturally differ on the merits of any such model. In this context they differ on the value of the functionalist model used here for analysing the family. Some would argue that it distorts more than it illuminates and thus *misleads* us as to the nature of reality. The general arguments on these lines are explored later in the course (in Units 29 and 30) and some may find it of interest to return critically to this unit after having studied these later units. Others again would argue that the term 'family' is too imprecise for such analysis. For the moment, however, the main emphasis has been to follow one conventional approach in stressing the illuminating rather than the distorting side of the functional model for analysing the family.[2]

The final theoretical point, therefore, might be summarised by saying that we are gradually building up one theoretical framework for analysing society (not the only possible one, but a helpful one that is used a lot in this course). In Unit 5 we encountered the idea of society as an interrelated totality. In this unit we have built on this by seeing the functions performed by one particular institution (the family) within this interrelated totality. It might be appropriate therefore to end this unit by repeating the statement by Chinoy which was exemplified in the first sociology television programme (*Interrelationships*) and which introduces his discussion of 'functional analysis'.

> Society . . . is a totality made up of interrelated and interdependent parts. From one point of view it is a complex structure of groups and individuals held together in a web of social relationships. From another, it is a system of institutions related to and reacting upon one another. From either perspective, society may be thought of as a functioning whole, as an operating system. (Chinoy, p. 93.)

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[1] This is discussed more fully in Chinoy, pp. 93–102 (especially pp. 93–6).

[2] For another discussion of the use of models by social scientists look back at the Correspondence Notes for Unit 4.

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Notes

Notes

Notes

D100 – UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY: A FOUNDATION COURSE

1 WHY PEOPLE LIVE IN SOCIETIES

1 The Fundamentals of Human Nature
2 Men and Government
3 The Economic Basis of Society
4 Societies and Environments
5 Man as a Social Animal

2 HOW PEOPLE LIVE IN SOCIETIES

Socialisation

6 Child Socialisation
7 Personality Development
8 Attitudes and Prejudice
9 The Family and its Functions

Economy and Society

10 Economic Wants
11 Production and Supply
12 Markets and Prices
13 The Sociology of Economic Behaviour

Money, Wealth and Class

14 The Workings of the Economy
15 Money
16 Distribution of Incomes
17 Social Stratification
18 The Psychology of Social Class

Spatial Aspects of Society

19 Rural Land Use
20 Location of Industry
21 Zoning within Cities
22 The Size and Spacing of Settlements
23 Approaches to Political Geography

Government and Politics

24 The Formal Structure of Government
25 Informal Political Institutions
26 Government and Politics without the State
27 (1) Political Culture (2) Politics and Political Systems
28 Politics in Groups

Stability Change and Conflict

29 Stability and Function in Society
30 Social Change in Society
31 Stability and Change in Social Groups

3 WHAT KIND OF PROBLEMS PEOPLE FACE IN SOCIETIES

The Population Explosion – an Interdisciplinary Approach

32 The Demographer and his World
33 Demographic Regions of the Indian Sub-Continent
34 Economic Implications of Rapid Population Growth
35 The Social and Political Implications of Rapid Population Growth
36 Diffusion and Acceptance of Change